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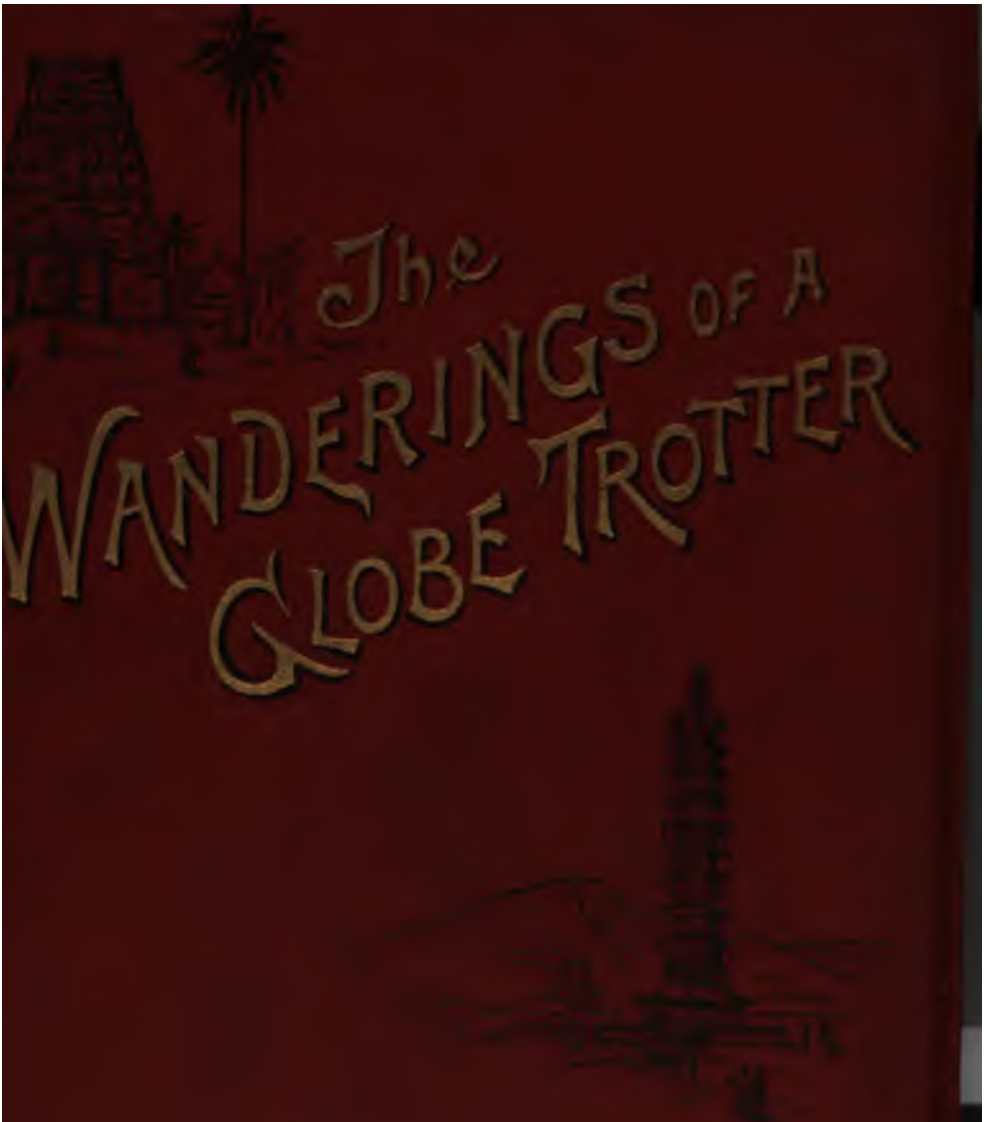

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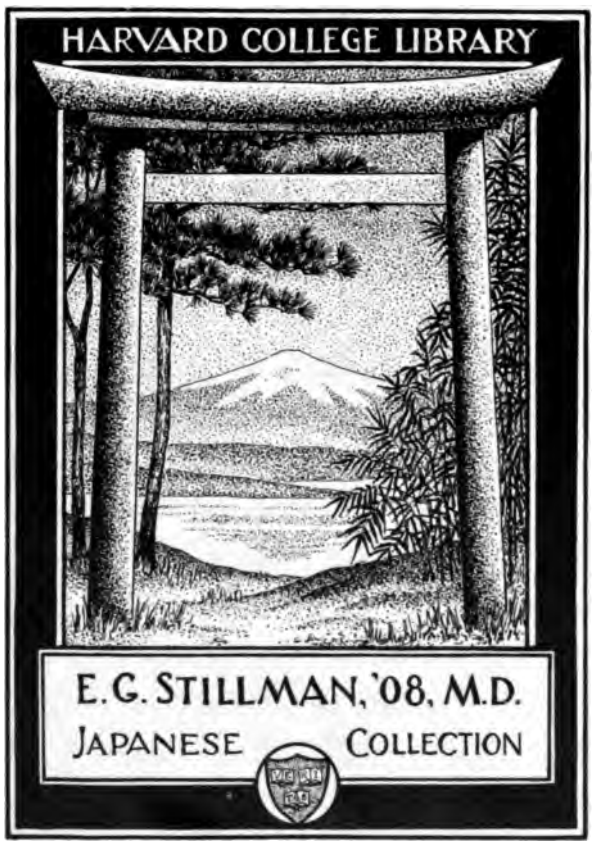
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WANDERINGS

OF A

GLOBE-TROTTER

IN THE FAR EAST

BY THE

HON. LEWIS WINGFIELD

AUTHOR OF

'LADY GRIZEL,' 'IN HER MAJESTY'S KEEPING,' 'ABIGEL ROWE,' ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

LONDON

RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON

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1889

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THE

WANDERINGS OF A GLOBE-TROTTER

CHAPTER I.

EASTWARD.

Out of the Indian Ocean into the China seas.

Steaming eastward slowly, though apparently motionless in the stagnant air. The thermometer that hangs just within the captain's cabin stands inexorably at 90°. The rays of the blistering sun are tempered by a double awning which soothes the wearied eyes with a cathedral gloom. To diminish as much as may be the prospect of suffocation, the side curtains have been removed, and when a golden line glints from under the canvas-roof across the limbs of an exhausted passenger,

he endures the burning sensation patiently as a lesser evil than exertion. The Malacca Straits are stiflingly hot at all times. As he lies prostrate, with dizzy head, curious dreams arise in the traveller's mind of east winds in far-off England, blasts which ungrateful Britons are wont to objurgate. Is not ingratitude the weft on which rosy designs are woven? Oh for a taste of a British *rasper!* One of its most rough and churlish cuffs would now be as welcome as an angel's kiss. A lady reclining on a long chair of wicker feebly fans herself; then, moaning, relinquishes the attempt. The effort is too severe for present circumstances, and, moreover, such wind as she succeeds in raising is a cruel mockery—as withering as a puff from a furnace.

Musing idly—languid, comatose, too oppressed for serious thought—one is vaguely, stupidly, beset by an impression of enchantment. The people in the Sleeping Beauty's palace must have felt as we do when the magic drowsiness fell on them which resulted in a century of

sleep. Are we to choke, asphyxiated? Or if doomed to sink into a trance, when and where shall we awaken? On one side there is something blinking at us through a white palpitating mist, which someone drowsily declares to be the Malay Peninsula; on the other, a long low fringe of dense jungle, broken here and there by a bluff of yellow cliff—behind, a scarcely perceptible range of shadowy mountains, backbone of the Island of Sumatra. We glance lazily, with half-closed lids, carefully refraining from turning the neck. So that is Asheen—a district as ugly as unpleasant—lair of fierce savages, whom the Dutch for generations have vainly endeavoured to subdue. Why take the trouble, and waste tissue? The sea is like oil, and seems to pant, as overcome with heat as we. Lascars and white sailors are slumbering on the hurricane-deck, breathing stertorously. The captain, trim in his smart white clothes, emerges from his den to reconnoitre. May this atmosphere be borne much longer, or must the ship be

turned? It is imperative sometimes while passing through these straits to perform the evolution in order to change the air. When passengers are dropping by twos and threes under heat-apoplexy the order is given to turn the vessel round, for if there is a slight breeze behind you are unaware of its existence, whereas if you revolve and face it, a small advantage is reaped which may result in the saving of life. There is an intermittent wail of babies below—crescendo, diminuendo, lunga pausa, then da capo—for they are rendered querulous, poor souls, by the irritation of prickly heat. You become dreamily aware of the monotonous creaking of the punkah ropes in the saloon, where a painfully energetic group are listlessly pretending to play whist. Then comes a momentary silence, quickly followed by a growl. Torrid bad language and brimstone threats of vengeance and redhot direful anathema are hurled at the guilty punkah-wallah as he dozes off and the slow curtain ceases to wave.

Will it be necessary to turn? reflects the captain, as he mops his face. No. For we have traversed without mishap the most grievous portion of the narrow channel. It is opening out. Asheen and Malacca retire from view, are already smaller and more faint, and though we are steaming direct for the equator we may soon count on fresher air. How strange is the aspect of things as the side landscapes fade and vanish! It is scarcely possible to detect through the transparent film of haze the line of the horizon. Sky and sea are one — pearly and opalescent, with burnished metallic hues fresh from a fairy armoury—the latter reflecting as in a glowing mirror the long wavering polished shadows cast by rosy clouds. Is it indeed a phantom ocean, or are we suspended in space? Above, below, the tenderly gradated tints are those of mother-of-pearl—blush-pink, faint gray, amber, the palest of pale blues. Not a sail or rock or islet breaks the illusion of hanging somehow in mid-ether. Yet stay, if we make a pro-

digious effort (which with reproachful muscular tinglings we shall regret for half an hour) to turn the head and look behind, we may mark that the mirror is shattered at the stern in two diverging lines of molten silver by the action of the screw; while in front—but really it is too sultry to move again—it is rippled by the skimming course of flying fish, as, like jewelled swallows, they glint along the surface. A closer inspection (could we summon courage to make it) would show that these tepid waters teem with life. There are dolphins gambolling—dark creatures, so light, though apparently as obese as Falstaff, as to resemble bladders filled with air. Sea-snakes mark the hidden presence of a reef; poisonous unsightly monsters they are, from six to seven feet long, striped black and yellow, which wriggle forward like a shaken riband, their flat repulsive heads peeping from the water. But not so ugly as the hideous sharks that roll lazily over and over in our wake, showing a horrible slit mouth—ideal post-office for libels—and

pale underside, following patiently, persistently, like implacable marine Selwyns with scaffold Jack-Ketch proclivities, and abnormally developed Newgate Calendar instincts, in the hope that someone will fall overboard.

By-and-by we come upon what appears to be a field of cabbages, or is it a verdant raft? An expanse of floating weeds of brilliant green which have drifted oceanwards from the streams about Manila; and as we watch it passing to the west, the atmospheric effect is magically changed. Huge fantastic banks of purple and dark gray have risen as out of the sea; the fierce sun glows red, and sinks in fiery splendour; and night falls swiftly, without warning, with the weight of a velvet curtain.

And what a night! The stars, like us, are lazy; it is too hot for them to shine. But the vault overhead is of a deep and glorious blue, lighted, as it were, from behind—set with one lordly gem, the Southern Cross, which, detached and sharply defined, glitters

forth distinct, alone. The sea is more oily than ever under the changed light, with scarce a ripple save at the prow, where two livid lines of phosphorescent green show that we are moving steadily. Where is the breeze which the too-sanguine captain hoped for? Alas! it is in the limbo reserved for disappointments and broken promises. If possible, it is more sultry than before. The atmosphere still weighs us down with myriad uncooled bonds, although we are in the open sea. The idea of retiring below is tabooed by all with such firmness as their characters can muster. Even after sunset our cotton clothes cling ponderously about our limbs. Women as well as men resolve to lie on deck, divided into two wards of sheep and goats by sails slung down the centre. By nine o'clock the quarter-deck, with its long rows of mattresses and snowy pillows, suggests a hospital. We creep into our places by-and-by, clad in the scantiest of garments. There is a period of whispered talk and smothered laughter as someone ex-

presses fears of being moonstruck ; a shouting and railing at the stewards as they tell off each bed to its proprietor ; a rustling and grunting that betoken settling down, then silence for awhile—a brief one—for loud recrimination rises in a growing wail of outrage insupportable from behind the canvas. The ladies, bless them ! give vent to shrill jeremiads of remonstrance. 'How like men, the odious, selfish wretches ! Of course they have cunningly taken possession of the only side of the ship that is favoured by a tiny draught !' Dear, dear ! it was quite accidental. A draught ? a puff no stronger than the sigh of a lovesick tarantula ; so small that the rising column from the funnel ignores its paltry existence. But why argue ? Friction produces heat, and heaven knows there is enough of that already. Let us admit for peace' sake that women were always put upon, and men abominable tyrants. And so, by-and-by, we sink into troubled slumber, lulled by the engine's throb.

At dawn we are unceremoniously shaken up by mischievously grinning sailors, and slink away shamefaced, aware in broad day of exiguity of garb. How pleasant long tropical voyages would be but for two drawbacks—crumpled rose-leaves that gall! The daily washing of decks is an exasperating and nerve-harrowing ceremony only to be surpassed in discomfort and a feeling as of being hunted by that horrid institution, coaling. In the first case, your cabin being untenable to anything but a salamander, you are driven from refuge to refuge by a travelling hose as relentless as the serpents of Laocoon. If you linger for a second—sure the Furies allowed leisure sometimes for the much aggravated Orestes to pause and rub his nose?—you become aware that the Wandering Jew was your own brother; for you are incontinently deluged without a 'by your leave' by a nautical fiend who, dripping himself, objects to others being dry. In the second case you are smothered in coal-dust—so fine and pene-

trating that for days after you find lurking in the most unaccountable places compact little black dirt-heaps which mar the smartness of your cotton clothes, smear your books, and spoil your temper. In mingled rage and abortive desperation you dash ashore, knowing that there is nothing to see, and fall among thieves—into the greedy maw of unscrupulous rubbish-vendors, and when, heated and cross, you return, laden with a costly litter which you will eventually toss overboard, your cabin is as swart as if it had been up the chimney, and of the temperature of an oven, from being kept tight closed; while as for sponges, brushes, shoes, you soon learn better than to examine them, seeing that when the eye is blind the heart is popularly supposed not to indulge in grief. It will indeed be a happy day for voyagers when vessels are propelled by electricity, or they are allowed about in Baldwin parachutes.

And yet, in spite of annoying petty drawbacks, which when out of sight are soon out of

mind, what is there more entrancing than landing for the first time on a new shore? It is the nearest thing to the wildly unorthodox proceedings of Fairyland, which are incompatible with our absurdly undeveloped and chrysalis existence. You have long had a sketch pictured on your mental retina of India, China, what not—the which sketch has been made a more or less accurate one by the conning of 'travellers' tales' and the examining of photographs. But what a delightful and bewildering series of new visions it is that assails your eye on setting foot ashore; one for which no photograph and no description can have prepared you. They are ever changing, and affect each person differently according to his bent of mind. Of buildings and landscapes, photography gives fair impressions; but what of the passing crowd, the ever-moving bustle of a new seaport, with its unfamiliar costumes and ornaments, and strange types of feature—the fish and fruit in the market, different in shape and colour from

any we have seen before? As we grow old we become *blasé*—it is an inevitable condition of incomplete mortality—but the first landing in a new country produces sensations which must stir the languid blood of the most world-worn. You become conscious of minute novel details—so small and trivial as never to have been worth chronicling—as charming as they are unexpected. Yet, delightful as they are, there is some truth in the remark of the grumbler that the legitimately expected surprises are somewhat forestalled sometimes. It is unfortunate that you cannot help being prepared in some degree for that which you are going to behold by what has gone before; since denizens of adjoining lands will travel and settle and carry with them some of their peculiarities. One ought to voyage by balloon (balloons, by the way, would not require to coal), and so come direct and fresh upon the novel, without the preparation which takes off the edge of zest.

For example, the first port touched at after

leaving Ceylon, travelling Chinawards, is Penang. Now, Penang is little worth seeing. There is an absurd waterfall, to visit which one is dragged miles in the heat, merely because fresh water here is so rare as to be a phenomenon. Yet one's attention is riveted with interest on landing by a foretaste of still distant China. You are enchanted to behold for the first time a lady, hailing from the Middle Kingdom, painfully tottering on lily feet; to mark in the shops Celestial merchandise; pagods, teapots, green jars adorned with unfamiliar plants; to embark for the first time in the jinricksha, which has been borrowed from far-off Japan. I would counsel future globe-trotters, however, to curb impatience; to forego a landing at Penang; even stoically to endure the horrors of coaling and showers of London blacks—so that when they set foot on the wharf of Singapore all may be marvellously new.

Singapore is at first disappointing—then delightful. After passing through the purga-

tory of the Straits, the vessel has been steaming slightly northward, and on turning the corner travellers are revived (though only three hours from the equator) by the fresh winds that sweep past Saghalien down the China Sea. At all Asiatic ports, a ship, on arrival, is instantly besieged by a host of curio-mongers, who spread upon the deck samples of their country's gewgaws. In India and Ceylon, bargaining becomes so earnest as to approach the confines of tragedy. Happiness in a series of cycles of future worlds seems to hang on the result. Eyes, hands, elbows, shoulders, all take part in the transaction. Looks of anguish or pained disappointment—flashes of indignant horror—alternate with persuasive smiles. At Singapore it is otherwise. The apathetic vendor mumbles his price, and languidly closes his eyes. Fate has the matter now in hand; the rest concerns him not. When you coaxingly make a lower bid, he half raises an offended eyelid, snaps his white teeth and shakes his head, for it is far too hot for argument. Not

but what it is cooler here than at Penang, for rains are so frequent that scarce a day passes without its thunderstorms. And how beautifully verdant is the background to a scene of gorgeous colouring and animation! Small quaint boats flock round the new arrival laden to the thwarts with a motley collection of shells and corals of all shapes and sizes. Silvery glistening nautilus, prickly, fantastic, lobster-coloured freaks of nature's fancy that suggest a petrified octopus or a gnarled star-fish, great spreading branches of a tawny ocean foliage fresh plucked from Undine's bower. And perched on a rowlock or a boatman's shoulder there are parrots of the daintiest green with gray and yellow necks, and small tame birds of brilliant crimson, which in the vivid sunlight pain the eye.

By its position and growing importance the town of Singapore becomes the abiding-place of nearly all Eastern nationalities. The stately Parsee, from Bombay, in red or orange, and the greasy Baboo of Bengal in muslin, rub

shoulders with the blue-cottoned coolie of Canton. The pallid, weary Briton in white linen and pith helmet, and the native of Manila in pink trousers and loose embroidered shirt, move slowly in the shadow of the trees. Carriages, like the gharry of Calcutta (a ramshackle open buggy), ply here for hire, since the more wealthy colonists dwell in the suburbs, and distances are long and the atmosphere exhausting. But the favourite method of locomotion is the jinricksha, a hooded and two-wheeled bath-chair, drawn by slowly-trotting men in wide umbrella-hats and very little else. Fresh from India, whose natives are dusky and spare in form to meagreness, one is struck by the splendid physique of the human horse. He is a model for the sculptor; his broad shoulders and chest and finely-modelled limbs are of a rich copper yellow, of the tone of a bronze of Barbedienne's. As he lolls in the shade, disdainfully awaiting custom, his attitudes are full of unconscious grace—the athletic idle creature, who will consent to

amble along and drag a ricksha in a casual and irresponsible manner, as a dog might drag a kettle and pretend it appertained to another; or condescend to hunt, or fish, or snare birds and butterflies, or dive after shells or corals, but who can never be induced so far to demean himself as to perform useful hard labour in the fields. Hence the large contingent of Chinese immigrants who are daily becoming a more important factor in all parts of the far East. The Malay is a fine fellow, but his head is to him what the claw is to the peacock. In extreme youth his face is not uncomely, though overbroad and flat-nosed; but when middle aged his visage grows repulsive, suggesting a badly-wrinkled medlar pear, or a rugose walnut, with a shiny-skinned appearance such as we are accustomed to remark in death.

The streets, with their dim arcades, are animated. The wharves teem with scurrying business. Europeans are hurried hither and thither in rickshas protected by white umbrellas. Boats, roofed with gabled thatch, are

so tightly packed together, that it seems as if nothing but a miracle could extricate one from the swarm. There are a few imposing buildings, in a town where architecture is mixed; to wit, a Palladian post-office, a handsome club of cut-stone, a wide-spreading hotel, with open loggie overlooking a spacious garden, where clerks and business men of small income are lodged and boarded by the year. There is the generally go-ahead aspect about the place which is to be observed in all English settlements, however obnoxious the climate.

The air is leaden, damp, and heavy. Though dressed in the lightest material, one envies the nude Malay, whose costume consists sometimes of a battered wideawake and torn side-spring boots, though a waistcloth and umbrella-hat and a pair of sandals is his more usual style of attire. It is always raining, or just going to rain, or just clearing up, when the burning sun draws from the soil in mist the superabundant moisture. Move as slowly as you will, your skin is never dry, and prickly-

heat—scourge of these latitudes—soon claims you for its own. The kaleidoscopic movement of so many, so varied in dress and in demeanour, becomes wearisome, then dizzying; and the traveller, hungering for peace, hails the nearest ricksha, and orders the human horse to drag his carriage to the suburbs.

If the approach to the town from the landing-stage (a distance of a mile or so) is unpromising by reason of black noisome swamps on either side, over which fishers camp, apparently with impunity, in wooden shanties raised on props out of the miasmic mud; if the town is somewhat too bustling for the condition of the thermometer—how delicious by contrast is the still and umbrageous quarter devoted to European villas! What a wealth of greenery, as vivid where the sun blinks through it as the emerald; what amazingly rich shrubberies of vari-coloured crotons; what extraordinary trees of stately bulk, which, meeting overhead, instead of being green, are literally scarlet! The roads about George-

town, Demerara, are remarkable for flowering trees, whereon gigantic blossoms hang in immense festoons like those in the apotheosis of a pantomime ; but their splendour pales before the scarlet trees of Singapore. Disdaining mere leaves, they concentrate their glory in dense sheets of blossom, through whose network burn golden patterns, glimpses of a torrid sky ; and the combination is so overpowering as to produce headache and a yearning for darkened spectacles. And what wondrous varieties of form are mingled pell-mell in the compounds which enclose the retired bungalows. There are lofty clumps of palms, areca and coco—the plumed giraffes of arboriculture —the traveller's palm, stiff, flat, uncompromisingly erect and regular, shaped like the candlestick of the tabernacle. Graceful rows of tall tree-ferns cast grateful shade, and drip upon dense thickets of maidenhair ; so rich and full and sumptuous a tangle of delicate tracery that the spectacle comes like a revelation of the glory of the fern 'at home,' and

the abortiveness of its puny efforts when confined in the British hot-house. And while we gaze and marvel at the reckless extravagance of mother Nature when she visited these parts, the greenery turns black, the brazen sky darkens to an intense slate, there are rumblings that seem to presage earthquake ; and down comes, as from a Titan's bucket, an avalanche of water, which in five minutes is exhausted, leaving all dripping, sparkling, and fragrant.

The prevailing weed, pest accursed of gardeners, which chokes the carefully-kept grass of lawns, and edges the long umbrageous avenues, is the sensitive plant ; the same which we treasure at home in tiny sprays for the joy of pinching it. Here it grows strong and stubborn and ragged and unsightly, ousting its betters, and propagating with distressing rapidity—an ugly weed, for it straggles overmuch, and its flower resembles nothing but a moulting tooth-brush which has been daubed a brownish-violet.

Many of the compounds can boast of ponds

and rivulets, masked partially by circular leaves, whose attendant lilies are rose-tipped; but here is the one point in the way of beauty which Nature in her hurry overlooked. She had booked her passage probably, and P. and O. steamers wait for no one. Here as well as in India and China, fresh water, being heavily charged with mud, is never clear, and we sorely miss the crystalline sparkle of our own hill-streams, with topaz depths and fair reflections, which even in times of spate are translucent as the beryl. But to make up for this little error our common mother was lavish with her insects. Large butterflies, cut out of brown velvet, go tumbling among the boughs like ships under stress of sail; strange creeping things like miniature nightmares scurry in and out; burnished green beetles, and objects on many legs that look like faded leaves or broken bits of stick; immense dragon-flies that seem as if steeped in cochineal. In the matter of fruit there was another trifling error. How flustered she must have been, to be sure, her

mind perturbed by too much luggage! Singapore is noted for its mangostine, which, I believe, grows nowhere else save in the Philippines. Its appearance is that of a white tomato enclosed in a hard red shell; its flavour is pleasantly subacid. But the disappointed wanderer is fain in candour to admit that as a fruit it is unduly lauded. At sight of an English nectarine it would turn livid with envy, and blush for shame. Perhaps it is over-appreciated because tropical fruits are as a rule so very nasty. Jack-fruit and bread-fruit are abominable, prickly pears a fraud, persimmons sour and indigestible. A loquat is a mean kind of yellow plum, sour when not tasteless. A mango is sticky and mawkish. The lichee of China alone comes up to the desired standard. On the dinner-table at home it appears as a dry raisin loose in a thin brown shell. On its own tree it is an idealized combination of grape and cherry; and a retrospective contemplation of its charms floods the sad soul of the returned globe-trotter with regrets and yearning memories.

CHINA

CHAPTER II.

HONG KONG.

THE first impression of China is that it is even more surprising than one expected, for it is a land of topsy-turvydom. Everything is done from an opposite standpoint to that which obtains with us. Hence whimsical eccentricities meet us at every turn.

The town of Hong Kong stands on the west side of a precipitous islet—a coned mountain, crowned by a flagstaff. Its streets rise, tier above tier, from a handsome quay, with many trees interspersed among its buildings; above, rambling and irregular series of villas stand in gardens; and again above is the bare mountain unadorned. The panorama which unfolds itself as the vessel steers among

the many islands is magnificent, both in form and colour. At first sight the bay appears to be a vast lake, land-locked, surrounded like a larger Maggiore by peaked hills, a false idea which is speedily dissipated when one marks the great quantity of shipping—mercantile and men-of-war—peacefully rocking at anchor. The Praya, or quay road, is imposing, for the houses that line it are much of a pattern, built of substantial granite, consisting of a colonnade and two loggie superposed. Each arch of the balconies makes an alfresco sitting-room for a family, gaily decorated according to individual taste with lilies in pots and porcelain monsters, draperies and lanterns—odds and ends of habitation. Unlike those of purely Chinese cities, the streets of Hong Kong are of European width, well shaded with foliage, adorned with many signs—oblong boards that swing heavily in the breeze, covered with gilded hieroglyphics.

On landing, what a turmoil! No sound of horses' hoofs or carriage-wheels, for there are

but few horses on the island; there are a few shaggy Shanghai ponies used for racing. Instead, what guttural cries of 'Sha! Sha! Cha!' ('Richsha! Ricksha! Chair!') from the picturesque and sturdy groups who squat like frogs in the shade, their big umbrella-hats bucolically dependent from the trees. Woe to the idler who elects to dawdle, for everything here is at high pressure, and ricksha and chair fiends mark down and run to earth as legitimate spoil him who would presume to stroll. First they reproachfully snort 'Sha! Sha! Cha!' with growing crescendo of injured indignation; and if he takes no heed, 'go for him' in a mass. How dares a well-dressed white man attempt to go abroad on foot? If he won't have a 'sha,' or a 'cha,' he must evidently require a sampan. If he is so misguided as not to wish to be borne on land, he must want to be carried by water. If not—he must be diabolically determined to establish an unpermissible precedent, and this must be nipped by hustling. The train of argument is logical,

and as he is still recalcitrant—why, hustled he is, straightway. Traffic is incessant, and done at a brisk trot, and the unwary wanderer is in constant peril of being knocked down. If travelling by ricksha, one is in perpetual terror of upsetting somebody; if on foot, of being 'spilt' one's self. Though ricksha-men go at a rush, nobody gets out of their way or heeds their cries of warning.

Little tables set with food—greasy messes that splash upon our clothes—move jerkily along; collections of sticky sweetstuff, long bundles of sugar-cane, large chairs, and cumbrous articles of furniture, boxes, packing-cases—all sway and swing from ropes, ready to play their formidable part as impromptu battering-rams. As everything is borne on a bamboo slung across the human shoulder, the stick is a thick and heavy one, some six feet long, a dangerous weapon in case of a street row. And street rows are not uncommon even in well-policed Hong Kong, for the English prison is more comfortable than many

a Chinese home, and all the riff-raff and scoundreldom from the mainland gravitate towards the foreign settlement. It is not prudent to engage a sampan or boat after dark unless a policeman has first taken its number, for the straw awning may possibly come down on the head of the traveller, and a knife be passed through into his carcass. The agent of the P. and O. Company, who dwells upon the quay, told me that on more than one occasion he had heard screams at night wafted across the water.

What a hubbub, what a rush, what a choice variety of searching odours! Stale fish, rotting fruit, bad drainage. What accumulations of filth and festering offal in the narrow native alleys behind the handsome streets. Yonder runs a man with a pig at either end of his bamboo, the feet tied together in two bunches. It is plain that they dislike their journey, and let you know it by their din. In a corner are two coolies, temporarily idle, using their unemployed bamboos for a bout at

quarterstaff. Crack! one on the sconce. A terrible weapon indeed! No wonder that so many have ugly cicatrices upon their shaven pates. There is another bearing two bobbing circular cages full of fowls tight-packed. Another follows with a gleaming burthen of curiously coloured fish, and yet another with fireworks and crackers. Here comes a great stone which will be used for building, and so heavy is it that it taxes the muscles of many men, who, with heads bent down and tottering legs, look like an enormous centipede. And now there approaches one with a triform stool and tray of a dull red. He rapidly unharnesses himself and beats a little gong, and straightway is surrounded by a cackling swarm who search fastidiously with chopsticks in his seething brazen pot. Men, women and children elbow each other good-humouredly with loud peals of laughter and strident chattering. They seek nice pieces in the broth and pop them into one another's mouths with brotherly goodwill, flinging back the

gristly bits for the behoof of later comers. The better part of the evil-smelling mess is swallowed in a trice, and the vendor is off again, and his place is taken instantly by a seller of hats and rain-coats.

Hong Kong should be dubbed the 'bamboo city,' for nearly everything has bamboo for its foundation. Ropes, cords, chairs, masts, sails, hats, rain-coats, the matting that is wrapped round boxes.

Turn we now to the water, which is as busy as the quay. Myriad steam-launches puff about, making day and night hideous with their whistling. Junks and sampans, of all shapes and hues and sizes, line the shore, temporarily united by planks, along which the boatmen run. What a lading and unlading; what shrill shouts and discordant cries; what an unceasing turmoil of activity! Some of the boats are short and thick, with rising poops that cover a cabin wherein, burrowing like rabbits, a whole family resides. All are gaudily decorated, and each is supplied with two

goggle eyes upon the prow; for a Chinaman cogently argues that 'if he no have eye, he no can see.' Each individual is a breadwinner. Even the unclean and sticky-fingered child can hold a tiller. Its mother—thick-set, not unlike an Esquimaux—manages a long oar, her last baby in a bag at her back, like a staring doll, bedizened with a red cap and hanging ornaments of looking-glass. All the water-folk are fond of gewgaws. Not a boatwoman, be she ever so faded and fubsy, but can boast of jade earrings and some bracelets. I saw one whose greasy and squalid garment was fastened by glittering buttons made of Indian rupees. As a protection from the sun, these women muffle their heads in blue flannel, or wear wide hats, trimmed with a cotton valance. The hats of the coolies are pointed, considerably wider than their shoulders. Men of the better class go bareheaded, carrying open fans held in front of the face to save the eyes from glare.

On a sudden there is a diversion on the

Praya, and men, women and children scuttle along the planks ashore, enchanted by the merry incident. Surely the Chinese are the cruelest of races, more cruel even than the Spaniards. If their treatment of prisoners is revolting, how may we expect them to be kind to animals? It is well that in the southern and central provinces there are no horses to be tormented. Some small boys have espied a rat in a ship-chandler's hard by, and having succeeded in catching it, they promptly soak the wretched thing in kerosene, and gaily set it alight. Far more alluring, this novel illumination, than the most ingenious firework! But the tables are quickly turned, and for awhile all is confusion and dismay. The rat revenges himself by taking refuge in a box-shop among the shavings. A conflagration and stampede; a yelling as of Bedlam broken loose, ere the shop is saved and the fire extinguished.

It is a singular trait of Hong Kong that people, unlike the usual denizens of small communities, seem so intent on their own business

as to be quite indifferent to that of others. The noses of the young Scotch clerks in the banks and warehouses are so tightly glued to their ledgers that, when they can be induced to glance up wearily, they can impart no information unconnected with their own trade. The native shopmen are sublimely ignorant of what merchandise is to be bought hard by, and indifferent as to selling their own. Their manners are suave and ceremonious, covered with a veneer of extreme politeness, under which is but ill-concealed a contempt for the white barbarian. When you propose to purchase an article its owner says, giggling, 'You likee?' But if you endeavour to cheapen it he turns on you a stolid eye. 'No likee, no takee,' he observes, sweetly smiling, and moves away to close an unnecessary discussion. Sometimes, to save himself trouble, he declares that the article required does not exist in Hong Kong, and when you have found it for yourself lying at his elbow, he murmurs unabashed, 'You likee? If you likee, takee then!' This is odd, for a

more industrious mortal than the Chinaman does not exist. He is always at work, loving his labour for work's sake; never needs rest or craves a holiday. Often, strolling homeward from a dinner-party, have I had occasion to watch artificers at work at one or two in the morning.

Wandering upward from the town among the villas, whence there is a splendid view, one is struck with admiration at so fine a specimen of human enterprise. The islet is by nature a bare granite rock. Yet it is becoming by degrees an enchanted garden, where rare trees flourish. In some cases good soil has been carried all the way from Yokohama! The peculiar disposition of the ground renders two methods of conveyance necessary. In the low-lying streets, the jinricksha is conveniently rapid. For climbing to the villas, or still farther to the peak, where the flagstaff is, and the signal-station, one is obliged to engage a chair, carried on long poles, by two or four bearers. There is something par-

ticularly delightful about this method of travelling. It is noiseless, and the staves are so elastic, that as you swing up and down you feel in some sort as though you were flying. Some of the private chairs are elaborately ornamented, the bearers being clad in startling liveries of white cotton trimmed with stripes.

CHAPTER III.

CANTON.

In fighting my way about the narrow and densely-crowded thoroughfares of Canton, I was made aware for the first time of the wide abyss which divides the abjectly-inferior Briton from the superior and enlightened Chinaman. You soon become accustomed to being mobbed and stared at, and are able to sympathize in fullest degree with the sufferings of baited royalty. Grown-up people treat you with a grave and repellent courtesy, for a lofty mandarin—governor of the province—issued a ukase recently to the effect that foreign devils must be better treated in the future. They are perforce civil, but they dislike you, and take no pains to conceal their antipathy.

They are benignantly tolerant of a lower order of animal whose comic ways, like those of chimpanzees, are worthy of casual study. Small infants usually shriek and weep and hide their faces at the horrific aspect of the foreign devil, whereupon they are smacked by the older ones as punishment for such craven conduct. Ingenuous youth declines to be coerced by any ukase into concealing its feelings, and as you struggle with difficulty through the turbulent throng, poked in the back or prodded in the side at every turn, your toes crushed every moment, you are followed by an obbligato of hoots and grimaces from a derisive posse of ragamuffins. They mimic your gait, indulge in elfish antics, are immensely tickled by your big feet and absurd garb, and ridiculous skin and hair; follow you in a crowing crowd into a shop; lean elbows on the counters, and gather in a mob outside, exhorting you gutturally as to purchases, advising you loudly what to buy.

The placid shopman ignores their presence,

unless they sit on his clean chairs. Then is his ire kindled. He makes a dive at them with a stick. They scamper off with a yell, upsetting the burthen of some passing coolie, to return presently in augmented numbers, like a malodorous swarm of flies. It is often a relief to take refuge in a temple, for there they are barred out by the priests. Happily there are many sampans plying on the tawny river, jumping into one of which a rude mob may be evaded; the comely, clean-limbed boat-girls are always civil, for they know that barbarians pay well.

For the behoof of foreign visitors to Canton —they are many, for Hong Kong is but a day's journey off, and this is the most accessible of purely Chinese cities—there dwells there a magnificent and benign person called Ah-Cum. He was once domestic to Archdeacon Gray, by whom he was instructed in the wonders of his native town, and since the departure of the much-respected Archdeacon has blossomed out into a guide. Not a mere

common guide, mark you, but a polished and courtly gentleman, a very Malvolio among guides. To contemplate Canton without the assistance of Ah-Cum is not to see it at all. By him I was in due course brought to my proper level, and taught my unutterable insignificance.

Upon arriving by steamer from Hong Kong, behold! a tall person in blue silk, waving an umbrella from a boat. Ah-Cum! I thought. Now must I prepare to be humble. Not at all. The gentleman was grinning and obsequious, nodding overmuch, garrulous in an unintelligible lingo. Can this condescending creature be indeed the celebrated one? I marvelled. No, of course not. My mind could not be improved in such a jargon. It was only Ah-Sing, the great man's brother, to whom I was to be consigned for a term of preparation, until Ah-Cum was at liberty to improve me. The satellite twittered like a sparrow, conducted me to shops where dogs were hanging for sale, prepared like mutton at home;

bought me a bit of the bird's-nest from which soup is made. In the rough it looks like a piece of dried turtle covered with dirt and feathers; after skilful preparation it assumes the form of white sinews, hard and tough and shiny. Then I was permitted to penetrate into an opium den, a retired place down a slum. Within the murky entrance was a small square hall, and a counter whereon pipes were lying, and whence opium, like treacle, was served out in a small spoon by a grimy witch like Mrs. Squeers. There were three low greasy floors, or rather inner balconies, to this strange habitation, each of which was to be reached by a movable ladder. A wellhole, surrounded on each story by a crazy landing, gave air to the pestilential kennel. On every floor there was a series of sentry-boxes, closed each by a swinging papered screen, through which came a whiff of rancid oil mingled with a faint searching odour as of sweet flowers in decay. Inside each was a matted sofa, a wooden pillow, and a lamp. The pigeon-holes

were nearly all occupied, sometimes by a single torpid figure, sometimes by a group of two or three, with a singing-woman twanging a guitar to amuse them till they slept. After the glare and noise without, the subdued light and smothered sounds were reposeful to the nerves. There was a low rippling murmur of whispered converse somewhere above; a creaking of ladders and of doors; a low muttering between a groan and sob; a heavy snore, as of one in pain and choking; a measured tinkle on a wired instrument—then quiet.

The fetid fumes and lack of ventilation could not be endured for long, and I was glad enough to emerge again into the hurly-burly. The Canton streets are more difficult to navigate without contusions than those of Hong Kong, for their average width is of five feet or thereabouts; and the space overhead is so beset with awnings, and a host of hanging signs of wood, gilt and painted red, swinging at different elevations from iron rods, as to produce an effect of twilight. The shops on each side

are open, forming good-sized square rooms, from which the fourth side has been removed, and into these the wayfarer is constantly compelled to plunge, in order to avoid the trotting coolie, who, with heavy burthens on the inevitable bamboo, as usual, runs amuck ; or a passing palanquin, which blocks the entire width ; or the ragged, clattering, unruly rabblement in attendance on some mandarin. In these shops goods are tastefully stored on shelves up to the ceiling, and people sit about, gossiping and smoking and chattering, or attending to the little altar before which a lamp is always burning, and joss-paper and incense-sticks flaring. You wander in and out, and nobody cares whether you buy or not. You give the loiterers a polite chinchin ; they remove their pipes for an instant to return the salute, and take up again the thread of their discourse. At night the fourth side of each room is replaced, and the streets become no better than narrow lanes, lighted only by the paper lanterns, one of which every passenger is compelled to carry.

Canton in the rain! How gruesome an experience! The uneven transverse blocks of granite with which the paths are paved speedily disappear under water ankle-deep. All who can afford it engage closed palanquins, which bump against one another in wild attempts at passing. From the closely-abutting eaves pour waterspouts. Each hanging sign becomes a conduit. The coolies from their big umbrella-hats splash water in your face. Vainly you draw your curtain, content to peep through the central hole half-stifled. It is impossible to keep out this water—it trickles down your back; creeps chilly down your legs. You find yourself sitting in a puddle.

Bedraggled and reeking with superabundant moisture after paddling thus for several hours, Ah-Sing and I embarked in our sampan, and were quickly rowed by the boat-girls, Bet and Sue, to the shambling inn opposite; and as we neared it, the satellite grew anxious, became silent, nervous, and pensive. 'Write me a

good character—quick—in my book,' he murmured, 'to show *him*—my brother!' We were indeed approaching the awful presence; for, lo! on the dripping landing-steps, too sublime to heed the elements, he stood—the great Ah-Cum.

A tall, lean man, handsomely attired, was gazing over our heads into space with the self-satisfied smirk which befitted a Celestial in contact with a mere barbarian. Bringing down his thoughts to earth, he waved condescending fingers with long nails, took me by the hand with infinite grace, led me within, and kindly bade me sit. With perfect polish of manner he suavely apologized for having turned me over to so poor a creature as his brother. Here the crushed Ah-Sing groaned, and bashfully and ungrinning acknowledged his shortcomings. The great man broke cautiously and gently that for yet another day he must absent himself and leave me at the mercy of Ah-Sing. After that (this reassuringly) I might rest certain that his energies should all

be mine. Then, with a sudden change of manner and a frown, he turned to Ah-Sing and snapped at him. 'Show me your map,' he sternly said; and when this was timidly produced, he proceeded to block away with a long, sharp nail such sights as he only could explain. On rising to depart, he implored me plaintively not to forget things which I did not understand, in order that he might put me right on his return. He was aware how deplorable was the pigeon English of the satellite; but in an imperfect world there must be some weak vessels. This was so vastly obliging that I gained courage, and rashly craved a boon. If he was free in the late evening, would he conduct me to the Flowery Boats, and show me one of the queerest spectacles in all strange Canton? Ah-Sing cowered. Ah-Cum looked gravely down, and slowly shook his head; then bowed himself out, with a sad and freezing politeness, silently. The two boat girls, Bet and Sue, had by this time come familiarly into the chamber, and,

leaning against the door-post, burst into shouts of laughter. Their bright eyes were dancing with merriment. Sue explained that the Flowery Boats were somewhat lacking in decorum, and that the great man would rather perish than be seen in questionable company. It was right, Sue declared with emphatic nods, that the foreign devil should see the show—what to a barbarian was shady company?—and she, Sue, and her sister Bet would themselves undertake to pilot me, if (this with prim emphasis) I would promise to be very good. Of course I would be good. Much more charming guides were Sue and Bet—swart, plump damsels, in tight clothes like boys—than the chap-fallen and incomprehensible Ah-Sing or his gaunt and stately brother.

On arriving by steamer at Canton, the first strange detail which strikes the eye is the feverish activity of the water population. The river is wide and swift—as yellow as Tiber himself; and upon it shoot hither and thither, like small fish, a myriad of tiny craft.

Along either bank long lines of larger boats are moored, some piled high with merchandise, some gaily bedizened with streamers, ornate with carving and gilding, for the behoof of pleasure-seekers; and in midstream, securely anchored, is so compact a group of covered barges, that at first sight it may be taken for an island. From this riparian encampment are wafted day and night to the mainland indistinct sounds of revelry, nasal vocal music, with a weird accompaniment of wire-scratching and a bang of many gongs. It is here that the 'gay dogs' of the Southern metropolis —the *jeunesse dorée* and their raffish elders— take their pleasure; and it must be admitted that their way of doing it is more sad and stolid than ours. There was no sign of impropriety. The great Ah-Cum might have condescended to land on the Flowery Boats without dread of contamination; or was it perhaps that he feared an unexpected bath, since the gangways are slippery with slime, riddled with many holes?

Bet and Sue—they have assumed these names for the convenience of European patrons—arrived at the inn steps at nine o'clock, seized me each by a hand, and deposited their prey in the place of honour under the bamboo tilt of their sampan. To be appropriately festive, they had adorned the interior with flowers and fringes of out paper; and very cheerful was the effect. This is the home of the two nomad and independent maidens, their kitchen, parlour, and bedroom — the state saloon of their employers. It is neatly matted, its side-walls are covered with framed pictures, and waxen figures in glass cases; there are lamps and candles in lanterns, and—culminating source of honest pride—a clock.

At starting we stuck in the mud, and with a merry laugh and sparkling teeth the girls skipped into the water to push us off, displaying a good deal of shapely limb; and, the act accomplished, sprang nimbly back again, shaking their wet clothes like water-dogs. I

marvelled at their well-formed feet and curiously delicate hands with well-trimmed nails as singular in persons engaged in manual labour; and yet they were as strong as agile, manipulating with ease a long and heavy punting-pole, ponderously shod with iron.

The river-traffic appeared to be as feverish by night as by day, and reminded me of regatta-time at Henley; for Canton on the water apparently never sleeps. The sampans shoot about, each with its nodding paper-lantern at the prow; the stationary house-boats throw gleaming rays across the opaque water; big towering junks, with sails of matting spread—black ghosts—steal silently down-stream, a dim lamp twinkling at the mast-head. Lanterns—endless lanterns of all shapes and colours—accentuate the dim bank-line; for illumination is universal. Here and there a mass of unusual brilliancy marks the whereabouts of an aquatic restaurant, whose wide balconies are full of merry-makers.

Presently we reached the central encampment known as the Flowery Boats; and Bet and Sue, again taking each a hand, assumed the *rôle* of guides. And well that it was so, or in the darkness I should certainly have slipped into the river. This celebrated place of entertainment consists of some dozen large barges moored together, upon which shanties of boards have been erected. A narrow passage-way between each is constructed of greasy planks—some so rotten that they give under the feet, and crumble in yawning fissures. In some places there are interstices of a foot or more, over which it is necessary to jump; and as the shanties are all alike, and the passage-ways unlighted, the visitor becomes speedily bewildered by rays cast from within. Having been warned by the maidens that a barbarian must not enter any of the chambers uninvited, we perambulated the gangways, glancing in at the merry-makers, who, doors and windows being open, were much *en evidence*. How strange a gathering! What

a dull and solemn way of seeking amusement! Instead of the antics of the Closerie or of Mabile, we beheld a *posse* of fat and stolid Chinamen, with round spectacles like owls and gorgeously broidered robes, lying or sitting on divans, dining or drinking tea in company of splendid houris, who rose and fled into adjacent ambush at sight of a barbarian, to the evident chagrin of their entertainers. In all Eastern countries it is *infra dig.* to dance one's self. Here, as in India, terpsichorean feats are performed by persons of low caste. In some of the little rooms a strangely painted female, muffled in heavy robes, with face raddled red and white, and towers of gewgaws in her stiffly pomaded hair, was gyrating slowly; in others instrumental music and singing—such singing!—took the place of dancing. There was no horseplay or undue familiarity. Nothing could have been more grimly proper, for Golden Youth was phlegmatic, sleepy from opium-smoking; sad and supremely bored.

Some glared and growled upon perceiving in the doorway a barbarian. One, an elderly Lothario, beckoned me within his chamber. Bowing and shaking my own hands with many chinchins I obeyed, and he civilly pointed to a seat and called for tea. Chinese tea-drinking is a terrible institution; for in the land *par excellence* of etiquette it is beset with many ceremonies. When your host takes a sip you must do likewise, or else he considers himself justly insulted; and this becomes a fearsome ordeal, for Celestial throats are of cast iron, and they quaff their liquid on the boil. This gentleman turned out to be a wealthy merchant, well disposed to Englishmen, who spoke pigeon English that I was able to understand. He summoned from behind a curtain his dancer, who had fled thither giggling, and bade her perform for my benefit. It was much the same dance as that which obtains at a Hindoo nautch or at a festivity in Tunis. The performer whirls slowly round like a somnolent teetotum, waving wide-spread arms, and chant-

ing nasally in melancholic cadence. Bet and Sue stood meanwhile respectfully without, awed by the honour done to their *protégé;* and so disturbed in spirit lest he should disgrace them, that one or other kept up a running fire of whispered admonition, of which 'Take care' was the burthen. The monotony of the entertainment, and the heat induced on a close night by libations of boiling tea, were so dreadful, that the exhortations of the girls were needed. Having accepted my host's invitation, it would be shocking conduct—such as could only be expected from the vilest and least-worthy-to-live barbarian—were I to rise undismissed and go. Happily, however, since everything is supposed to come to those who wait (as false an axiom as most cant sayings), a moment arrived when the dancer succumbed, and the teacups were empty; upon which the merchant grinned, and bowed, and nodded, and conducted me to the sampan, and stood on the gangway nodding and grinning still as we shot away into the stream.

In course of time, the great Ah-Cum took me under his protection, hailed two palanquins, and, as was to be expected, selected the best one for himself. I had found him sitting at my breakfast-table in a gabardine of purple silk. Waving long fragile yellow fingers as his courtly way is, he informed me I might breakfast, and that he would repose until I had finished. Might I venture to invite him to partake, or would it be familiar and presumptuous? He benignly withdrew me from the dilemma, for, drawing a plate and dish towards himself, he ate and drank heartily. Under the veneer of conscious superiority, I found him an interesting man, brim-full of thought and information. His late master, Archdeacon Gray, had won his sincere respect. Quite different, he hastened to remark, lest I should be too much encouraged, is the Archdeacon to any other barbarian—very, very different. By-and-by I inquired how much I was to pay for Malvolio's services; but filthy lucre was too mean a subject to taint his lips

withal. He waved it away with his long fingers. 'It didn't matter; anything I liked.' Astute Ah-Cum; bland, but not childlike. What I liked, forsooth! Crushed by the influence of his imposing presence, I must perforce be lavish. Into his silken lap must dollars galore be poured, with meet and grateful thanks for their acceptance. I talked to him of the cruelty of his countrymen, and his lips grew set and stern. Death has no terrors for a Buddhist. Hence, if punishment is to be meted out, it must take the form of exquisite and ingenious anguish in the present life. With this for his text, Ah-Cum planned out his day, proud to impress me with the harsh and uncompromisingly pitiless side of justice and crime in China.

Sir Harry Parkes and Mr. Loch were evilly entreated in the north when prisoners, and yet in Chinese eyes they had little to complain of. If prisoners, they must, of course, be made by discomfort to realize their galling position, and to that end were enclosed in

cages, tormented with chains and bonds. Criminals got their deserts, Ah-Cum declared with satisfaction. As it chanced, seven pirates had just been captured, were to be tried *pro formâ*, and executed. If I liked, I might watch the process. I must divest myself, though, at starting of absurd barbarian notions of pity. Pirates were pitiless, the blackest of heartless ruffians, accustomed to cruelly maltreat their victims. Whatever befell these, they would get nothing more than they merited. This promised to be interesting. I replied that I would gladly follow them on their dark and ensanguined path.

Threading the mazy thoroughfares of the old city, we arrived at a narrow lane, a *cul de sac*, bounded along one side by a high blank wall, on the other by a row of hovels, occupied by potters. Along the wall were ranged, like theatrical properties, crosses of various dimensions. On a shelf there were several skulls enclosed in little cages; the

skulls of malefactors, which were to be despatched for exposure later on to their native villages. The potters were hard at work, chirruping like birds. Strange! In the time of Christ was not the potter's field the place of execution? In this narrow lane where we were standing the criminals of Canton are executed. We were in luck, Ah-Cum declared, for yonder shambling individual emerging from a door at the end was no other than the public headsman. 'This is fortunate indeed,' I said. 'Let us interview him forthwith.' 'Monsieur de Canton' was thin and tall, with a stoop of the shoulders. He dragged his legs wearily, as if he had seen so much of death that life was merest mockery. Aged about five-and-forty, he did not seem muscular or strong. His eyes were watery and shifty. He was courteous and civil enough, by no means shy. I dare say he looked on a foreigner as a low person of mean caste, on his own inferior level. Certainly none but a foreigner would be seen openly convers-

ing with him. Times were good. There had been many executions lately. His salary was ten dollars a month, and a dollar per head chopped off. If it was a simple beheading or a more elaborate affair, the pay was the same, which was unjust, for surely the skill of the artist should be considered. For example, he had had to operate the other day on a matricide (most heinous of crimes in a country of ancestor-worship), which involved some trouble and artistic arrangement. He who does to death father or mother is crucified, bound tight with a network of fine wire. The portions of flesh which are thus raised in lumps are nipped off with pincers; then the knife comes into play. Twenty-two cuts are *de rigueur*—two over each eyebrow, two down each cheek, two round the upper arms, two across the breasts, two across the knees, one rip down the sternum. By this time the malefactor's head may be expected to fall forward. Then one deft sweep, and off it goes, and after that he is dismembered and disembowelled. All this was

vastly edifying, told in the most commonplace way, like instructions as to carving venison, and a fit prelude to the scene that was to follow.

We bade polite farewell to 'Monsieur de Canton,' with an assurance that we should soon see him at his work, and threading the streets again, reached a large wooden doorway decorated with colossal wall-pictures of vengeful and frowning gods. This was the entrance to the Supreme Court of Judicature. Through the archway into a vast muddy yard, littered and encumbered with wooden cages, cangues (heavy boards worn round the neck), mallets, and other grievous implements. 'In these cages, Ah-Cum whispered, 'the pirates had been brought from sea.' As we paused to look around, a side door opened, and there emerged the inevitable coolie with bamboo and swinging burthen—but how unexpected a burthen now! In a basket was the pirate who had been tried the previous day. Again he had been summoned, being wanted to corroborate some evidence. The poor creature had been

so tortured that he could no longer stand. The *question*—in this year of grace! With a thrill, I bethought me of Dumas's terrible picture of La Mole and Coconnas; of shattered Guido Vaux trying to sign his name with mangled fingers, and falling back fainting with the effort.

First I was ushered through the side door to peep at the prison from which the pirate had been brought. Up two steps, through a low portal, into an ante-room of small size, hung round with instruments of torment on nails. A hard-beaten mud floor. So soon as the eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, one became aware of a partition at one end of stout bamboos, some seven or eight inches apart, cage-fashion, through which unkempt heads were struggling at sight of a stranger, and grimy long-nailed claws thrust out for 'garnish.' All screamed and shouted and banged themselves against the bars like frantic monkeys. Some who by reason of the weighty cangues about the neck were unable to rise

crouched on the floor and added their howls to the concert. Gaol-birds depend upon stray charity for sustenance, and many probably were starving. How like Bedlam in the old eighteenth-century days of straw and waist-chains! At Mexico I visited the prison, and gazing on the scene of horror, thought nothing could be worse. Yet this was a shade more dreadful. The darkness, the odours, the rattling of irons, the half-famished foaming demoniacs, with wild gesture and bloodshot eyes! No wonder the criminal classes gravitate to Hong Kong, where the place of duress is conducted on mild and sanitary principles as in England.

Heart-sick I emerged and rejoined Ah-Cum (he knew better than to follow into that den); crossed the yard, passed under another archway, rounded a lofty screen, and lo! the justice-chamber—a big square room with one side off, completely open to the air. The opening faced us, and against the supporting pillars were lounging groups of stalwart Tartar soldiers,

with halberds and swords and loose and shabby, but extremely picturesque, uniforms. The Tartar soldiery are a truculent and lawless class, whose swords and fists are unduly active, and who loathe and despise foreigners. I was warned in travelling up country to give them a wide berth. One day, however, beset by curiosity, I walked boldly into a barrack where a host of giants were parading. They gathered round, and I thought I had done something foolish. It transpired soon that they only wanted to examine me, feeling with huge paws my clothes and hair, for they had never seen a foreigner, and gave vent to crows of amazement. By-and-by I chinchinned, and was permitted to depart after having been civilly conducted over their quarters, which were airy and clean enough.

The justice-chamber of Canton is open to all; but there were no spectators except ourselves and a few idle boys, for proceedings of this kind are constantly going forward, and apparently differ little. The room, I remarked,

was divided into three by rows of slender wooden columns, and in each compartment a separate trial was going forward. In the centre of each was a table, whereat sat four presiding mandarins in official robes, and long black satin boots, with pipes and fans and tea before them. They appeared to be half asleep, waking up now and again to throw in some fierce remark; the talking being done by parties on each side of them. Now and then they glanced over a brief, shouted at the hapless prisoner, as if to say, 'Dare to deny it, you dog!' occasionally rose and strolled away, and then others occupied their places. The standing figures on one side were evidently counsel for the prosecution—there seemed to be none for the defence—on the other, reporters taking notes, and an interpreter whose business it was to translate the low dialect of Canton into the superior language of the mandarin. The reporters smiled sardonically, and tapped pencils against teeth as if *blasé* with much of this. The counsel glared and stormed and shook threat-

ening fingers, seeming to imply, 'Don't think for a moment that you will escape me. I've got you, and will grind you to powder!' Meanwhile the soldiery and little boys were keeping up a running commentary, arguing among themselves, criticising the cases audibly—one of the most whimsical scenes I ever witnessed—a strange combination of the Holy Inquisition with a devil-may-care nineteenth-century *abandon* and indifference.

Each prisoner under trial kneeled before his judges' table, conducted thither by the pigtail, like a dog by a string, and was forthwith put to the torture. By the law of China a culprit may not be consigned to the headsman without confession of his guilt, however red-handed he may have been taken; and as some may be inclined to be obstinate, it is obvious that much precious time may be saved by wringing forth confession speedily. The most interesting case was apparently the middle one, for about it the critical little boys were clustered. 'The captain of the gang,' Ah-Cum

whispered; and seemingly not unfamiliar to the Bench, for now and then a scowling judge in peacock's feathers curled up a long lip and snarled with sharp teeth, snapping out a withering string of previous malpractices. I watched this prisoner narrowly for hours, and came to the conclusion that Mongols do not *feel* as Europeans do. Their nerves are less highly strung, their organism is less delicate. Hour after hour passed; the man showed no sign of suffering except quivering muscles, strained beyond control, and a movement of the tongue about his dry lips. His voice never faltered or grew weak. He answered steadily and loudly, casting a furtive hunted look out of the corners of his eyes at the gibing by-standers, making no complaint. And yet, that man was enduring torment under which you and I would have completely succumbed long since.

Stripped, on the bare stones he kneeled, his back turned to the light; his arms, stretched straight, were lashed with cords to a beam of convenient height. At the back of the knees,

between thighs and calves, was a stout pole poised, with agonizing effect on the sinews. Both ends of the pole were off the ground, and at each end was a warder standing ready to joggle it with his foot if the culprit was tardy or recalcitrant. If he proved mulish the ends were to be pressed simultaneously, with the result of breaking the legs. Diabolically ingenious, if bland and childlike Chinee! It would be dull, no doubt, if all the culprits were enduring the same torment. Several had been kept kneeling on sharp chains for four hours, a preliminary 'question' likely to induce docility. One under examination knelt against the board through a hole in which his pigtail was secured, while his leg was twisted round with stays suggestive of shipping, till his big toe appeared on the wrong side of the tortured foot. Yet all bore their afflictions with similar stoicism; gray-faced and haggard, but without a moan or sigh. Torture is admitted to be necessary, but the line must be sharply drawn. Such is the order from

Peking. There is a grand official who goes about the country in peacock's feathers and festoons of amber beads, whose sole duty it is to report to the Emperor at the capital cases of over-zeal. The culprit must confess; his paralyzed finger must be dipped in red ink and smeared across a document. 'His mark' must be set in acknowledgment of 'mea culpa,' but no more pressure must be brought to bear than is needed to secure this end.

In the instance of these men the smudge was made, the crime confessed, and then their torment ceased. Active torment, that is. The captain of the gang of cut-throats, being loosed from his bonds, fell all of a numbed heap upon the pavement. This was unseemly. An irate janitor exhorted him to rise and bustle about forthwith. As he declined, the said janitor proceeded to rub his shins with the rough sole of his shoe, till the pain of renewed circulation caused the limbs of the culprit to shrink. That was enough. His bones were not broken. He was but

little damaged. How dared he be so idle and obstinate? Away with him! The coolie with the bamboo and the baskets appeared upon the scene. Two victims were bundled in; the coolie trotted off; the low door opened and closed. The maimed creatures would see the light of day no more till they were borne to the lane of execution.

In order to follow the sinister drama to the end, I made a second pilgrimage from Hong Kong to Canton to see the last of the pirates. There is a varying lapse of time between trial and execution, because the viceroy of the province is required to sift evidence before signing the death-warrant; and peradventure he sleepeth or is on a journey.

It was at six in the morning that I again saw 'Monsieur de Canton.' Ah-Cum declined to be present. I was the only foreign spectator of the tragedy. The potters and their boards and appliances were absent. When I reached the lane, it was broad chill daylight; the headsman and his aide were standing ready.

There were raised seats at one end and a few soldiers lounging; at the other end a barrier. Soon arrived, with much shuffling of feet and cries to clear the way, a party of mandarins in closed chairs, surrounded by the usual rabblement bearing cognizances on poles—a small knot of officers. The mandarins took their places on the seats; the officers stood behind. It was their duty, like British sheriffs and officials, to see that the sentence was carried out.

A shuffling and pattering. Coolies with swinging burthens. The seven pirates in baskets, who were carried to the daïs, and, on a nod from the officials, taken backward to the centre of the lane and shot out in a row like so many sacks of coals. The victims being helpless, they were shaken up into an attitude as like that of kneeling as might be. The aide loosened their pigtails, which had been bound round their heads, tied round the face of each a string with a pendent end under the chin—his chief intently watching. The latter superintended the exact angle at which each was to

be placed, walked up and down considering—his victims meanwhile motionless—and, satisfied, gave a signal to his aide. This person, beginning with number one, took the pigtail in one hand and the string in the other, and began working the head of the culprit slowly backwards and forwards till his chief cried 'Ha!'

A flash of a short two-handed sword. The head, swung by the pigtail, was dropped into a basket, and so on till all were headless; and then the baskets were laid at the feet of the officials. In China it is so easy to buy someone who will suffer the extreme penalty for a sum of money wherewith his family may be enriched, that it is necessary to identify malefactors both before and after execution. The movements of the aide with the two cords is that the head may be poised, with the chin raised, exactly at a certain angle, which will allow of decapitation between the occiput and the first cervical vertebra, leaving the axis, or second vertebra, unsevered.

The rapidity of the transaction took one's breath away. The arrival of the mandarins, of the doomed; the sweeping away of all signs of what had passed. 'Monsieur de Canton' presented me with the fatal weapon, much as a brush is given to a lady who is 'in at the death,' and ere I had done examining it, the place was clean, the daïs and its occupants had vanished. The potters had sprung as out of the earth, and were chattering and laughing over their labour.

CHAPTER IV.

COASTING NORTHWARD.

COASTING northward, and touching at the small ports which are open to foreign trade, one is filled with deep commiseration for such of our unlucky countrymen as are compelled to vegetate in the far East. Swattow, Amoy, Ningpo, Tientsin, are places of grievous and monotonous banishment wherein a small knot of Europeans cluster together for mutual protection and support against a vast population that loathes them. An old settler told me one day that in dealing with Chinamen a European can never get beyond a certain point of ceremonious and unfamiliar intercourse, though he may live his life among them. There is not, and there cannot be, true sympathy between the

races. The *literati*, or educated class, hate the intrusion of foreigners, because the advent of the latter implies a ray of light cast upon Celestial darkness. Hence, all sorts of tales are invented to the detriment of the intruders; the simple country-folk are led to believe all kinds of atrocities concerning us, and therefore shrink from our contact as from lepers. When you penetrate inland, you become in a marked degree impressed with this state of things. Travelling mandarins glare and scowl as they go by; peasants are abusive, and sometimes throw stones; but when you arrive in remote rural districts which the evil influence has not reached, you find the peasants cheery and good-natured, more given to smiles than frowns.

At the treaty ports, Europeans are cast upon their own resources, which are few. In some places it is possible to go shooting in the immediate neighbourhood; in others, even entrance to the adjoining native town is strictly prohibited. A group of English or

Scotch youths find themselves thrown together in a trying climate, with no means of amusement, and no female society to cheer them. So far as the natives go, their hand is against every man, and *vice versâ*. At one little place I was informed that, work over for the day, the young men dined, and went to bed 'to be safe under the mosquito-curtains,' since it was better to be dull than bitten. Evenings were appallingly long and dreary. Driven to desperation, surprise parties were sometimes organized. Such an one was *drawn* at midnight, and mulcted of drinks. Sometimes the *drawed* was cross, and, resenting intrusion, flung bottles out of window, and the affair ended in a free fight instead of in festivity. Members of the tea-trade are more fortunately situated than bank-clerks or general merchants, for the elder partners of tea-firms can absent themselves during a portion of the year, returning to their posts in time for the business of the season. I arrived at Foo-chow—the most important city in the great Foh-Kien

province, third city of China—just at the commencement of the tea-season. The steamer was crowded with gentlemen returning to their posts, either from home, or Australia, or Japan, and the juniors who had been left in charge were assembled on the landing-stage in excited crowds. How long had this moment been looked forward to by the banished! What warm salutations and handshakings, what anxious questions anent small local interests. How were the dogs and the monkey? Had Spot and the puppies got safely through their troubles? Had such a wall been whitewashed, such a window been repaired? The effect was that of lads returned to school after the holidays, exchanging experiences, eagerly bandying questions. There was a young man by my side to whom the sight of the Foochow pagoda brought sadness unalloyed. 'I am a junior,' he sighed, 'and shall not again leave this horrid place for five years, at least. I have been home, and wish I had not, for I return with sinking heart. During

my trip I have, of course, seen many fresh things, and imbibed many new ideas, and shall find my associates exactly where I left them. Out here, no mental progress is possible.'

At Canton the natives were courteous, at Swattow they were aggressive, at Foo-chow almost openly hostile. In truth, China, though extremely interesting by reason of its oddity, has many uncomely sides. The squalor, the dirt, the terribly bad smells! Black filth festering in open ditches under a hot sun; malodorous buckets carried by strings of coolies to be emptied on the rice-fields. Sweet nature, indeed! It is impossible to stroll outside the settlements without a scented handkerchief. Decay everywhere; dirt in excelsis. A Chinaman never repairs his house till it threatens to fall upon his head, hence there is a general air of crumbling and ruin. He washes his clothes sometimes; his person rarely. The eye as well as nose is being constantly offended. There comes by a troop of disfigured wretches,

stricken with leprosy; myriads of pigs dash helter-skelter along the narrow thoroughfares, swine, young, old, fat, lean, some on the point of maternity; dozens of pariah curs of wolfish aspect lurk in ambush, mangy and sore, hungry and hollow-eyed, sharp-toothed and surly, all with a strong desire to taste the leg of the foreigner; vendors of some simmering atrocity, a glimpse of which revolts the British stomach. How unutterably nauseous to sight and smell is native chow-chow! Stewed celery and rotten cabbage, half-cured and ancient fish, bubbling in a black brine with scum of grease and bits of bobbing pig flesh. Early in the year the wide stretches of rice-paddy on the plains are pleasing by reason of their vivid verdant colouring, and the beautiful snowy paddy-birds that stalk gracefully among the shoots; but on near approach the illusion vanishes; the scented handkerchief is waved. The cultivation of rice is a hideous occupation for men and women, involving, as it does, long hours of wading on hands and knees in sewage-

mud, patiently kneading the slime about the roots, bloated and sweltering bull-frogs jumping in and out.

The city of Foo-chow is interesting from its vast dimensions, its picturesque situation on the river Min, with a background of grand mountains, the variety and brilliancy of its shops. To traverse the city in a straight line takes two hours, moving rapidly. Indeed, it is necessary to be borne briskly by the chairmen, lest you should be mobbed and insulted. The traffic is so prodigious, the apparently interminable street is so full as to appear impassable. The trotting coolies keep up a constant gurgling shout as, with heads bent down, they push and jostle, forcing a way for chairs or cumbrous merchandise where it seems as if passage there was none. A marriage-procession swings along, consisting of all the household gods, wedding-presents, and paraphernalia of the parties, hanging from bamboos. It is the fashion, on the occasion of a wedding, to fill the bosoms of wayfarers with envy by dis-

playing the whole of your possessions. Nor chair nor stool must be left behind. Four-post beds and huge wardrobes stagger on, big mirrors, red lacquer trunks, tables covered with rich stuffs and dresses (securely fastened, by the way); then gongs, and bells, and shuffling servants, and a closely-shut palanquin, gilt and painted, gay with silken streamers, the casket that holds the bride. A company of soldiers meets the procession, followed by the rough ponies and ragged retinue of some magnate on a state visit to the Viceroy. Blows and curses, objurgations, threats, guttural shrieks. The stemmed stream overflows into the shops, to the injury of delicate goods. Despairing yells from the shopmen; more curses and more blows ere the difficulty is overcome by stress of fists and shoulders, and the flood flows on again. Here the houses, unlike those of Canton, are almost invariably of a single story, with heavy overhanging eaves that almost touch, under which are displayed an infinite variety of merchandise. The

shops are mere booths of wood, so small that bulky articles lie piled on the road. Hence the invasion of a mob means dire havoc. The curio-shops are enticing; but unhappily the foreign devil dares not linger. If he descends from his chair to examine something, a crowd gathers instantly—a rude, rough, elbowing crowd—which gapes at him as if he were a doll, and unceremoniously pulls his hair, and twitches his garments. There are wonderful ornaments of jade and soapstone, fine lacquer, dragons, sumptuous porcelain, embroideries. But the special features of Foo-chow are the weird monsters fashioned out of tree-roots, and an elaborate species of pewter-work. Nearly every house boasts of a chandelier of sculptured pewter, upon whose branches tigers and fowls perambulate among lamps and tassels and strings of beads, and cats skip nimbly as in life. These articles are strange, and in their way beautiful. It is curious that there should be no shop for the sale of them. He who wishes to possess one must make friends with

some tradesman who will part with his own, or must get one specially manufactured.

Here, as in almost all Chinese towns, there are wooden gates at intervals, which, closed at nightfall, divide the city into wards, each under the supervision of a 'headman.' The arrangement is a good one, and works well. The Emperor delegates a fraction of his own high authority to the viceroys of provinces, who in turn transfer a portion of their powers to lower officials, and so on down to the caretakers of wards, who in their turn hold heads of families responsible. Thus a criminal can be easily traced; and if, when run down, he is not to be found in the flesh, his family are arrested *en bloc*, and kept in duress until the culprit is produced. From the close meshes of such a net he finds escape well-nigh impossible, for how is he to lose his identity? His only chance is to assume the priestly habit, or make for a treaty port, where laws are modified to suit foreign prejudices. Hence, Swattow, Amoy,

and the rest teem with malefactors, pariahs so base and hardened as to dread no more the shadowy vengeance of outraged ancestors. Female crime is rare, for the heads of families wield powers of life and death over their women, and punishment is prompt and swift. On the other hand, veneration of parents being the foundation-stone of the Chinese creed, a woman, when quite old, develops into a tyrant. Her 'good time' begins just where that of a European lady ends; and to be dubbed 'old woman' becomes a compliment instead of a term of opprobrium.

The European contingent at Foo-chow numbers about a hundred and thirty. They dwell in shady bungalows on a little island overlooking the vast Chinese city, with the broad Min running between, spanned by an antique bridge of lichened stone, and as lovely a view of rich rice-plain and craggy mountain range beyond as the eye can wish to feast upon. They are a cheery and hospitable set, but are fain to admit that in matters of amusement

and relaxation there is much to be desired. Ladies are so few, that it is difficult to muster more than three or four for a dinner-party. Isolated on their island, they do not mix with the Chinese at all, except in matters of business. The labours of the day over, which consist for the most part of tasting samples of tea from tiny cups, they congregate at a cosy club-house for exchange of small gossip before dinner. Billiards, whisky pegs well iced, and an undercurrent of light raillery. One marvels as one listens at the barren narrowness of such a life. The veriest trivialities grow into importance, like the spider in the prisoner's cell. And then, when the thick veil of night has quickly fallen, how picturesque and busy grows the scene! Each gentleman's chair and bearers wait without to carry him to his home; and each of the cackling crew of attendants is provided with a paper lantern. The party having broken up, with a 'Good-night' and rendezvous for the morrow, the hill-side is like an illuminated ant-hill. Twink-

ling glowworm lights of all colours bob rapidly hither and thither, and vanish one by one. It is like a bit of fairyland. Then comes dinner and whist, and much yawning, and an early bed.

CHAPTER V.

THE YUEN-FOO MONASTERY.

A DELIGHTFUL luxury which the heads of Hongs or business houses allow themselves is the houseboat. Not the ponderous and unwieldy square box upon a barge, such as we see on the Thames, a thing so unmanageable that it can only be moved by the aid of horses and ropes. A Chinese houseboat is a small yacht, wide, and flat-bottomed, with a commodious saloon and cabins, and an upper deck provided with comfortable chairs. It has a tall mast and a huge sail, and skims as swiftly as a bird when winds are favourable. At other times it is propelled by eight standing rowers, or towed with a bamboo rope. The crew usually musters about fourteen, whose wages are about a shilling

per day apiece. In the stern is a mysterious hood, from which, at fitting seasons, are wafted pleasing scents. When urged by laudable curiosity one peeps below, gratification is mingled with astonishment at the ingenuity of the Celestial 'boy.' Out of a thing that looks like a crucible there is evolved, by his deft yellow fingers, a series of *plats* which our own well-instructed cooks might envy.

Trips up the Min, or the Yuen-Foo, its tributary, are the compensations for days of dulness and dismal drudgery. Shooting expeditions—for the river banks are rich in game—or mere lazy sailing, with idle admiration of the superb landscape, as it unfolds its varying beauties, as gorgeous in colour and mountain-silhouette as much-vaunted Italian Como. Picturesque farmhouses rise out of a foreground of roses and azalea, with a backing of feathery bamboo. Their heavy red-painted roofs are tilted like skates at the corners, and are provided with cumbrously carved wooden balconies, quaintly bizarre in shape, and rugged

flights of stone stairs winding to the water, where fleets of shallops lie; while sparsely scattered in protected nooks are straggling villages, each with its conspicuous temple-front, adorned with a glittering frieze of birds and flowers in brightly-coloured tiles, flanked by two towering masts.

Farther north, the prevailing tone of a Chinese landscape is sad and dun, for the waters are always yellow, and the green of the rice plant is soon browned by excessive heat; but here it is ever changing, while the mountains frown or smile as only mountains can, in rosy light and transparent azure shadow, or leaden gloom under fast-drifting thunder-clouds. The foreground is chameleon-hued. The gliding stream is tawny or steel-blue, or has turned black as ink, crested with ghastly spray. The sampans and junks, with their comical shapes and gaudy painting, fit completely their surroundings. The sails, made of matting, are delicious to the artist's eye—lemon, rich brown, or red.

And then the people! The men, in summer-time stripped to the waist, are like polished brass in sunlight. The women's heads glitter with a multitude of fantastic silver pins. And the boating population, who lurk about the coves and undergrowth, in fleets, on rafts, camping under mats—how sinister! Not one, with his fierce topaz eyes and jet-black pupils, and gleaming teeth and form as muscular as antique statue, but is cut-throat doubled with sailor. Not one but will turn pirate when occasion serves; will handle a knife as deftly as an oar, and will plunge the one into your throat as unconcernedly as the other in the water.

As you are slowly rowed up-stream, you become uncomfortably aware of the number of those savage-looking persons. As they shoot under the bow of the boat they laugh and chinchin right merrily; but there is something about their manner which is threatening, and instinct whispers that if an accident occurred they would turn into open foes. As these houseboats are used chiefly for sporting

purposes, they are well-provided with guns and ammunition, and the fishers know it. Though handy with the knife, they have a wholesome dread of bullets. Moreover, they know that there is little on board of value. It is well, however, to be wary in the matter of landing. The native skipper knows each twist and turn of the Yuen-Foo, and where his white cargo may be put on shore without danger of unpleasant consequences.

My host, too busy with tea business to accompany me in person, made up a party, and sent us off in his sumptuously appointed craft, with cook and victuals, and an ample store of champagne and other good things, to visit the Yuen-Foo monastery—an expedition of four days.

At night we were to anchor, for native boatmen cannot row without singing, and their monotonous nasal chaunt to the British ear is maddening. Besides, it would have been a sin to miss a yard of the landscape—the coves and bays and varying foliage, the constant kaleido-

scopic change of enchanting atmospheric effects. During the first night there was a deluge of rain, and in the morning our progress was delayed by exigencies of toilet. It is a serious matter to a Chinaman to get his head wet. It involves the unplaiting of the pigtail, and the spreading of the locks to dry. It is amusing to watch men grooming themselves or each other. Just as at Calcutta the natives squat down anywhere in the road to be shaved by peripatetic barbers, so in Chinese towns there is a hairdresser at every street corner, armed with comb and razor, cloths, and a tripod seat. The quantity of hair compressed in a pigtail is astonishing; combed out it fairly covers the shoulders, and is of extreme length, independent of the silk and tassel at the end.

Hard by, on a little hill, I beheld a joss-house or temple, with curious frescoes on the inside walls, and asked the skipper if I might land and sketch while his men were dressing. After considering awhile, he thought I might, for the country-folk were at this hour away at

work in the fields. I accordingly went off to the joss-house, but had not been sitting on my camp-stool more than five minutes, when a knot of dirty coolies came by with rakes and hoes on their shoulders. They paused for a moment to see what I was about, then held out their palms for money. The Chinee is always wanting money, and looks on a wandering globe-trotter as a well-filled money-bag sent by a beneficent deity for his especial benefit. I shook my head and went on sketching. The biggest coolie—a repulsive fellow, whose foul skin was covered with sores—slammed to the temple-doors, and leaned against them with folded arms. No money, no sketch! Our boat was within but a few yards. I rose, gathered my goods, and strode down the hill with dignity, pursued by a clamouring crowd wildly gesticulating. The people were so dirty and so threatening that dignity gave way to expediency, and my pace was increased to a run. The skipper was waving his hands with gasps like one who is dying. I was seized by many

hands and pulled on board; the landing-plank was quickly removed, and then from bank to boat and back again was bandied a torrent of abuse. With gestures of fire and brimstone the aggressors pointed at me. What? The wretched foreign devil—the money-bag—declined to be squeezed! Pernicious precedent! He should be squeezed, or forthwith pommelled. To this end one or two rushed into the water, attempting to board the boat. Our skipper boxed their ears and tugged at their pigtails, plunging their heads under water; while our sailors, shrilly shouting and dancing like maniacs, pushed off into midstream. That was a bad place, the skipper remarked later, when we were well out of reach of a shower of stones: 'No likee Inglees gentleman.' His tactics, he explained in pigeon jargon, on such unfortunate occasions as this, was to hit very hard but laugh all the while, as though it was the best of jokes. Such a method of action gives a light and humorous aspect to a fray, and deprecates the use of knives.

Further up-stream a bar and rapids, which made it necessary to exchange our vessel for a rapid-boat, specially constructed punt-fashion. A long, narrow craft, with a poop and heavy steering-oar like a mast, worked on a pivot. We went aboard, taking chairs whereon to sit; and there straightway tumbled after us a crew of athletic ruffians, eighteen in number. Not dangerous these, if truculent; for they hold a license from the Viceroy, which would be cancelled were they convicted of misdemeanours. The rains had swelled the river, which was full of eddies and whirlpools, called 'chow-chow water,' because they have a tendency to devour fishers. Even this cockle-shell required herculean efforts to make it move up-stream. Some rowed, some—waist-deep—pushed behind by means of cross-bars and butting of heads. What a gabbling and chattering the while, and gurgling and gasping, and cries of 'Ou-à-ou!' After several hours of this we landed, and commenced an adventurous pilgrimage to skirt a village, which the skipper said we must

avoid. It is odd how feeling changes in this district! Sometimes you may go straight forward without peril, certain to be stared at with round eyes—stupidly, but not inimically. At others the sight of the 'devil' is as a red rag. He is a rat, to be pursued, and hunted, and pounded out of his vile existence.

An hour's rough climb through bamboo jungle, wading in very cold water—for rivulets were rivers now—slipping on wet slopes and treacherous moss. Bamboo-groves are beautiful; for their dainty fretwork is graceful and varied. The old yellow spear-heads of last year linger on the boughs—slender, strong stems: yellow, pale, green, and black—the healthy, full-grown leaves are of emerald; tiny ones are emerging into life. The undergrowth, from which spring the long strands so gently waving and whispering, is of maidenhair, wild azalea, and wild gardenia. It is difficult travelling—a scramble; for the path is but a line over rugged broken ground, passing sometimes along the edge of a preci-

pice. You cling to the bamboos, which catch and save your slipping feet; your clothes and hands are torn by prickly shrubs; and you are not sorry when, panting and drenched, hot and thirsty, you reach the base of the sacred mountain, on the apex of which is the monastery. And then what a breathless struggle! The ascent is made by means of a long, steep, slimy staircase cut in the rock, part of which actually overhangs a chasm with a fall of a hundred feet, overshadowed by a beetling crag. There are at intervals covered rest-houses, with seats whereon to cultivate strength and courage wherewithal to cope with the next stage and its difficulties. The ascent appears interminable; we may never reach the top. By-and-by fatigue drops from us, and we are filled with amaze and awe at the panorama which unveils before us. The rice-plains spread far away—away—dotted with many a village, to the encircling amphitheatre of peaks. The silver river winds with many a bend and sweep, its course marked by

a line of more vivid greenery, and dark clumps of fir and pine. What a lovely land, inhabited by how objectionable a people! Squalid, foully dirty, fierce and brutal, eaten up with overweening conceit. They are the only nation in the world; all other races are too mean for their serious consideration. After all, it is the upper class that is at fault. Venal, avaricious, cruel, unscrupulous. The lower lieges have been reduced to apathy by a long course of unpitying oppression. Now and then, cut to the quick, they rise, violent and savage, and are guilty of prodigies of ferocity, then settle again to bear. There is no cause for wonder at their treatment of foreigners. If they firmly believe that we carry on a trade, for medical purposes, in eyes of infants, is it a marvel that they should execrate our presence? The denizens of the Middle Kingdom are fond of children. Their ignorance and strength of faith are inconceivable. At the time of the sack of the Summer Palace some sallied forth armed only

with long poles. They had been told that foreigners had no knees; that if they were knocked down, they would be unable to rise again.

At first sight, the character of the ordinary Chinaman of the central provinces is a paradox. Under his philosophic phlegm lurks a volcano. He will endure pain and hunger unmurmuring; will submit like a lamb to starvation, induced by the heavy-handed squeezing of his superiors. But now and again, exasperated by some trifle, he will rise up and loudly demand his manhood's rights. Not long since, M. Chiarini applied for permission to bring his circus to Foo-chow, and was refused, because he naturally objected to give entertainments free. Now, it is the custom, as far as the coolie is concerned, for theatrical entertainments to be free. A rich proprietor pays a sum for the entertainment of his tenants. Chiarini's proposed show was his private speculation. A year or two before, a Japanese troupe had set up a tent here, and

proposed to charge for entrance. The coolie rose, and resented an infringement of his privileges. He cut holes in the canvas, penetrated within, made havoc of the properties, and, as a gentle reminder, walked off with the contents of the cash-box.

Courage! Up the steep stone ladder. We are actually nearing the summit. An archway, or rather a hole, pierced by Nature in the mountain. Through it we creep, wading in water, brushed by dank vegetation that clings about our legs. An interval of darkness, a steep, stony path, and then, poised above us like a crow's nest, perched high in air on stilts under a flat ledge of rock like a vast umbrella—the monastery. How singular a dwelling! He who selected such a site must have hated the world right well; for ere we reach it we have yet an array of impediments to conquer. With little trouble this abode might be made an impregnable fastness. Twin sentinels bar the way to a rush of numbers; for between two tall rocks there is

a fissure of but thirty inches wide, so that those who would approach must march in single file. The path, with its tangle of maiden-hair, is rugged and slippery ; for over the umbrella ledge there pours a waterfall with a sheer drop of sixty feet—a transparent curtain of spray, through whose film you perceive in shadow a low row of straggling wooden buildings, supported on long posts, garnished with fantastic eaves and carven balconies, painted scarlet. An ideal home for a crew of pirates such as infest the river. But no ; having at length scrambled to the top, we are received in a large hall by a knot of Buddhist priests, harmless, serene old men, in robes as gray as the rocks, who chinchin, nodding and smiling, while they prepare the inevitable tea and brass basins of water for ablution. They conduct us round the hall, pointing out their treasures. There are ancient portraits of deceased abbots, dry and precise in style and correct in drawing, that remind one of Holbein ; there are the usual altars

and sleeping Buddhas, drums and bells, and pots with smouldering joss-sticks.

Everywhere, in private houses and shops as well as temples, joss-sticks are kept burning to ward off evil spirits. At temple entrances there is always a low barrier, which you have to step over. This is to keep out the vindictive ones, who happily seem to be feeble and crippled, if numerous—unable to steeple-chase over even so low a fence. It is odd that those who dwell in these Eastern lands should be engaged in a perpetual conflict against emissaries of ill by means of a complicated system of charm and incantation. The Christian theory of a guardian angel enters not into their ideas. All their gods are scowling and apoplectically vengeful, with threatening action and fierce frowns on their bedaubed visages. Only Buddha on his lotus-flower is calm, and his is the indifference of sleep; his expression is that of one who is deaf as well as blind, superior to all the weariful array of carking troubles to which world-worn mortality is subject.

Besides the central hall, there are branching therefrom various smaller ones, straggling and irregular, built out on the stilts afore-mentioned, and overhanging the precipice, or perched in such holes and corners as are burrowed by Nature in the stone.

A row of canonised worthies, sumptuously gilt, occupy a series of niches cut in the living rock. By means of various quaint little staircases or ladders, a set of cells may be approached—neat and tidy enough, with wooden bed-places covered with clean mats and wooden pillows, like the traditional footstool of a French theatre. Verily, they are not luxurious, these ancient monks. Stretched on such hard couches their poor old bones must ache. They intimate that it is their dinner-hour, and that we way join them if we choose, an act of courtesy which we respectfully decline, for the saucers of steaming green stuff are not tempting. They emit an acrid savour, and are probably as nauseously bitter as the tea, which is unfired. The absurd process of tea-firing,

whereby the leaves are carefully manipulated and exposed to great heat, is considered by a genuine Celestial as of a piece with the other silly customs of barbarians.

No. We have brought our own provisions, and, if we may, will picnic in the inner parlour. A parlour, this, of which the abbot is justly proud, for there are rows of uncomfortable stiff chairs with marble seats and backs, and hard-wood tables inlaid with mother-of-pearl; steel mirrors hang between lanterns, and in the centre on the wall—culminating treasure—there is a common eight-day clock of cheap American manufacture. All Chinamen glory in the possession of horologes. The abbot asks the time in order to show that he is possessor of a silver watch, and then stands upon a chair to set the precious clock. The monks gather round, and, crowing and laughing, examine our watch-chains, try on our finger-rings. Doubtless, if they dared, they would like to annex the baubles, for it is whispered that some of these gentlemen have left the

busy world for their country's good—have found it convenient to take refuge at the horns of the altar, and, as it were, 'take the veil.' Be that as it may, they are civil and even friendly, curious as to our manners and behaviour. Seated round us in a circle as we eat, they nod pleasantly when we look up, slyly mimic the motions of our knives and forks—cumbrous and awkward implements as compared to the native chopsticks—and make remarks one to another. It is like Louis XIV. dining in public at Versailles. I wonder if the privileged spectators of that august ceremony nudged each other's ribs with elbows and commented between giggles on the royal demeanour and appetite.

It would not do to descend that long and dangerous staircase except in full light of day, nor would it be prudent to linger at all on land after nightfall, considering that for the time being the inhabitants of the district are spitefully inclined. We therefore bade a friendly farewell of the recluses, and made our

way downward to the plain, pausing now and again to impress upon the mental retina that lovely panorama. Half-way down is a shallow terrace shaded by wind-swept pines, bent awry by blasts from seaward, and standing there to take breath, we could perceive immediately below the village, which in coming we had avoided: a labyrinth of narrow streets like a maze, with outlying houses in gardens; in the centre a square which we could see was full of people. What were they about? There must be a festival toward. The nearest way to the river where lay our boat was through this village, and the sun was sinking fast. Far away beyond the rapids, where the water was yellow with shoals, were many junks—and barely visible in the extreme distance the dim sea-line. What a variety of boats and sails, the latter of all colours, some so tattered as to look like aged shirts hung, fluttering, to dry! But it was not wise to linger thus. Downward to the plain, then; and so into the village, the streets of which were strangely

silent. Evidently there must be a festival. Yes; the entire population—men, women, babies—had congregated in the central square, and from under an overshadowing tree were intently watching an al-fresco theatrical performance. To force a passage through the dense mob was no easy matter. We had struggled half-way across, the people luckily too much engrossed to notice us, when an actor on the stage pointed with his fan and made some jeering remark. A piping voice from someone at the back replied. Then all at once there was a flutter of fans like a rustling of birds, followed by a general hoot. Our men had straggled surreptitiously away to purchase samshoo—a detestable spirit made from rice which is dear to the soul of the coolie. There was no time to lose, for visages were threatening, and the mob, being in numbers, became aggressive and began to hustle. Children howled and dogs yelped. We called loudly for our men, who hurried up, and belabouring spines with fists, made a way for us,

while a knot of people on a balcony behind waved fans, pointed at teacups, and shrugged shoulders, deprecating the rudeness of their fellows. They beckoned us to go to them; but the distance to the water along a raised stone causeway was short, and the great oar of our boat plainly visible. So, ignominiously we ran for it, pursued by curses and volleys of stones and mud, and once on board sped swiftly over the rapids in a few minutes, a distance which, travelling up stream, had taken many hours to cover.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FOO-CHOW HOSPITAL.

THERE is, or was, an institution at Foo-chow, which for many reasons was peculiarly interesting. A certain clever and persevering young Scotch doctor had, protected by a group of influential and farseeing Chinese gentlemen, actually dared to set up a European hospital on an islet in the middle of the River Min, where the two bridges meet which span it. Now, native doctoring is the merest farce. Superstition and incantation rub shoulders with outlandish nostrums, and it may fairly be admitted that when cures are made, the physician is usually Dame Nature. A native medico makes no use of the knife. Resections and amputations are scouted, for he who dies with

only one arm will possess only one in the next world. Hence surgery is practically an unknown art. All kinds of curious medicines are in use, of whose infallibility we may be permitted to be sceptical. They tickle frogs till the irritated animal exudes a liquid which is supposed to be a useful anæsthetic. When returning from Japan I saw some deer in cages. These were for a doctor at Shanghai, who would in due course submit the poor things to slow and excruciating tortures, in order that the foam which flowed from the nostrils in their pain might be carefully gathered and bottled. Now, it had occurred to one particular merchant of Foo-chow city —in his way a philanthropist—that all this was wrong in principle. He had seen cases of marvellous cures due to the European system, and was determined to act as pioneer for the benefit of his benighted countrymen. I was permitted, by this gentleman and his Scotch practitioner, to go over the young hospital and examine the condition of the patients.

It was but a dirty, tumbledown place, but everything must have a beginning, and the doctor felt encouraged, for his *clientèle* was daily increasing. Unfortunately only the very worst cases, up to the moment of my visit, sought as a forlorn hope the help of the foreign devil, and many, therefore, were past cure. Certain signal victories had, however, been achieved. Men had recovered under treatment who had been given up by native bigwigs, and this set me wondering how it was that the latter, jealous of interference and exposure, did not make a raid and destroy the tell-tale premises.

The doctor sat at a table, while out-patients defiled before him one by one at sound of bell; the fat philanthropist, in a sky-blue robe, with an immense diamond ring and fine fan, and a beautiful smile, occupied a chair at his right, while I took the other on his left. The Scotchman was sharp, quick, and decisive, performing casual operations of a slight kind as he went on; while the gentleman in blue

paternally lectured and exhorted. A tooth was out, an abscess was lanced, in a trice. Graver cases were diagnosed and sent to bed in an adjoining ward. Chop-chop—quick, quick! A basin — sponges — bandages! It was all so swiftly done that the bewildered patients were speechless. No chloroform was used. It seemed unnecessary, and again I was forced to remark, as I had done already at Canton, how comparatively unsensitive to pain is the Celestial. Operations were endured without a groan or wince, which would have caused a European to shout and shrink. The demeanour of the patients was amusing to watch. Some were shy and suspicious, and had to be coaxed or bullied before they could be induced to explain the cause of their presence. Others marched boldly to the table, and displayed their diseases with a self-satisfied smirk of honest pride. 'No one but a superior Chinee,' they seemed to say, 'could suffer from so shocking a complaint!' And some of them were really shocking from too long neglect. Most, as

might be expected, were due originally to low diet and dirt; diseases of the skin—scrofula, scabies, eczema. The great man's aides-de-camp were clean, nimble native lads, who were laughing and merry over their work, and, whilst appearing interested, looked upon the proceedings as a grim kind of jest, which was piquant and fascinating. They made plunges at the dazed and unaccustomed patients, ran at them with sponges, skipped round the operating table; but when serious services were required, showed minute nattiness and skill in bandaging. The Scotch 'devil' exercised an influence over their skittishness which many doubtless considered due to sorcery, for his eye was as piercing as his knife. They had no chance of *squeezing* the patients after the fashion of their cozening and covetous race.

Eighty cases having been disposed of in daily routine, we visited the wards. Clean iron British bedsteads, covered with thick matting; low rooms, with windows opened wide; patients for the most part querulous

and carping. They snapped at the presiding genius as he stood smiling over them, complaining of the slowness of their cure, whereat he laughed, extremely tickled. Was this not their own fault, for procrastination and want of faith? One man was mightily indignant because a delicate operation for cataract was as yet incomplete. He could see a vague something, he complained, but nothing clear.

'Patience, patience!' laughed the chief caustically; 'or soon you'll see nothing, and relapse into eternal darkness.' Such proofs of pig-headed ingratitude roused the indignation of the philanthropist. He fanned himself vigorously in his anger, and reviled his besotted countrymen. 'If you don't take care,' he said, 'I shall kick you out of the place! I hope you will not be cured, for you certainly do not deserve it!'

Some had brought tame animals with them, from which they would not be parted. A whimsical trait this of inconsistency,

considering how cruel all Chinamen are to the dumb brutes. There was the usual snarling contingent of ill-conditioned curs. A pet hen bivouacked under a bed. A duck waddled across the floor. The relations of one who suffered from typhoid fever were feeding him with unripe plums. 'What pigs and useless dogs!' ejaculated the blue gentleman in wrath ungovernable. 'Can't you understand that you are killing him? My blessed ancestors forgive me! I'm almost ashamed to own a pigtail!'

In spite of vexatious little drawbacks, this European hospital was the most promising sign for the future which I had yet seen in the Middle Kingdom. It was a ray of light that seemed destined to pierce the pall of impenetrable gloom. Alas! some months later I met on board a coasting steamer the good fat philanthropist. After the usual ceremonious greetings, he sighed and shook his head. 'You will be sorry to hear,' he observed regretfully, 'that shortly after you left Foo-

chow our pet little hospital was destroyed, and some of our poor patients grilled. It was burned to the ground by the hand of an incendiary.'

CHAPTER VII.

SHANGHAI.

Two days of sea-dreaming; of chewing the cud of recent, always novel, experience; of sniffing the delicious air; of taking the measure of new acquaintances; and the scene, with an interregnum of salt space, changes once more abruptly.

The boats of the China merchants' line are well found in all respects; but expenses are such as to cause the thrifty to grow grave. Forty dollars, at three-and-fivepence a dollar, for a journey of two days! At first sight monstrous dear; but, then, are not all Chinese ways peculiar, and the prevailing arrangement with regard to steamers no exception to the rule? For your forty dollars you may be

certain, except during the first rush of the tea-season, to have a roomy cabin to yourself. The food is 'Englees chow'—in other words, it consists of excellent Shanghai meat, cooked plain in British fashion, and liberally served. And then (here is where peculiarity steps in), all liquids except champagne are included in the passage-money. Thus the abstemious anchorite finds himself paying his share of the ample libations of the toper; the temperance orator is treating the drunkard! All ordinary wines, and not bad ones either, are to be had for the asking—unlimited whisky pegs and brandy cocktails. Indeed, it is not uncommon to find an hospitable captain somewhat hurt if his passengers are too modest in their wants. All passenger steamers, Chinese and Japanese, are officered by Britishers for reasons connected with insurance companies, and each captain usually unites with other duties that of caterer. Hence, if passengers are shy of eating and drinking it casts a slur on him. Since you may drink what you please without extra

charge, if you elect to decline the privilege, it stands to reason (in a hot climate, too) that there must be something amiss with the liquor.

The first impression of New Shanghai is not a favourable one. It is sham European, made up of shreds and patches stolen from other towns—possesses no individuality of its own. There is a fine wide river frontage—a Bund, or quay—with tall houses well set back, and a scrubby avenue of trees, which seems to ape the airs of the Thames Embankment. The river is as wide and foul as the Thames at Westminster; the opposite bank is hideous, consisting of muddy flats with here and there a juvenile factory. The houses that back the Bund are smug and truculently florid; over-decorated, preternaturally new. The town is divided into three blocks: the American, the English, and the French; the division-line consisting of a slimy ditch spanned by a bridge. Thus, as you whirl along the front in a rick-sha, the Yangtze Road suddenly becomes the

Quai de France; the Union Jack is exchanged for the tricolour. Even this is not original, for a similar plan obtains at New Orleans, a resemblance which becomes the greater by reason of the fleet of snow-white Mississippi steamers which ply up the Yangtze Kiang.

Until the English settlers flock around you, which they speedily do, with the lavish hospitality that distinguishes them, you are disappointed with Shanghai, for you did not undertake a pilgrimage of so many thousand miles for so feeble an imitation of Europe. Nanking Street, the chief thoroughfare, at right angles to the quay, is like a bit of Regent Street-cum-Manchester invaded by a flight of Celestials. Surely, telephones and telegraph-wires, symbols of Western progress, are out of place on Chinese soil. The very ricksha men have exchanged their native garb for a medley of cast-off wideawakes and seedy coats, and highlows down at heel. There are carriages about—actually broughams with servants in livery. How strange and unfamiliar

to the ear has become the sound of horses' hoofs! The roads are everywhere of normal European width, instead of two or three feet, as at Foo-chow. There are—what? Yes! Absolutely there are British 'bobbies' in cloth tunics and helmets. It is satisfactory to perceive that the would-be European turns-out are *manqués*, for the quadrupeds are but rough Shanghai ponies, animals that go well, but are not pretty to look at, while the syces, or grooms, wear garments a size too large, and high hats of antiquated shape that come down to their eyebrows, and give an air of being bonneted. The fashionable drive is along the Bubbling Well Road, a suburb with trim gardens on each side, which instantly suggests the Edgbaston of Birmingham. In the cool of the evening all kinds of nondescript vehicles rattle over this road — ramshackle, weak-springed shanderadans; victorias stuffed full of Chinese ladies, all raddled, painted, and pomatumed, with great bunches of artificial flowers, and gilt fans held up as sunshades.

Chinamen and Chinawomen are emancipated here. The latter show themselves in public; the former are friendly instead of sullen. The ladies must be colour-blind. Their garish garments, elaborately broidered, are of a raw hard blue and an excruciating pink, and their artificial flowers suggest the Lowther Arcade; but they are perfectly satisfied with themselves as they smirk along, for the effect they produce is at least startling, staggering to the cultivated eye. On the other hand, the men, oddly enough, are pleasant to look upon. Hitherto one has been wearied by a monotony of blue; cotton for the coolies, silk for the better class. Here we find more variety, for native gentlemen and tradesmen affect harmonious and sober combinations, in which russet and citrine are pleasantly juxtaposed, deep puce and a rich nut-brown.

There is one thing original about Shanghai, and that is a vehicle much patronized by the lower classes, which consists of a wheel-barrow worked on a large central wheel with a plank

on either side, after the manner of the Irish jaunting-car, the sitters' feet being supported in an uncouth sort of stirrup made of rope. When there is but one passenger the effect is comic, for the barrow has to be nicely adjusted to the requisite angle by the experienced man-horse who pushes it, so that it may retain its equilibrium, otherwise the precious freight would inevitably topple in the mire. Sometimes there is an obese old lady perched on one side, the results of her marketing on the other. The 'pusher' adjusts the articles to a nicety, small objects being deposited upon her knees that the counterpoise may be exact. This requires time, thought, and practice; and the affair is gone through with such a systematic solemnity that one is reminded of 'weighing-in' on a racecourse.

For a newly-arrived stranger it is no easy matter to reach his proposed goal without an unduly erratic journey and a few adventures. The conspiracy against a pedestrian is even more intense than at Hong Kong. As a new

comer, he is recognised at once by the ricksha harpies as their legitimate prey. They fall on him and attempt to rend him piecemeal. They hunt him down with shouts and yells, and when at last, driven to despair by persecution, he runs to earth, and selects a tyrant as a protection from the rest, that triumphant sportsman scurries off at full speed straight before him without inquiring whither he should go. He has got you, and for him that is sufficient. What matters the object of the journey? You belabour him on the back with an umbrella—he takes no heed—and therein he is not without excuse; for he knows not, nor wishes to know, one word of English; you, of course, are entirely ignorant of his hopeless and exasperating language; and to complicate matters further, residents find it convenient to adopt Chinese names, such as a native tongue can get round, and by these, to all and sundry, except strangers, they are known. A fresh arrival is unaware of this custom, and, despairing, resigns himself to fate

and to his tyrant. The ricksha-men have not even learnt the word 'hotel,' though they spend two-thirds of life on the Bund beside its portals making wild rushes at its emerging inmates.

Being ever so many thousand miles from home, it is satisfactory to turn from the prim and ostentatious Christian settlement, with its precisely-planned squares and exactly rectilinear streets, to the venerable Chinese city which lies behind. Characteristic and very curious, although so near, is Old Shanghai, with its swart moat of reeking ooze, its tall crumbling walls, and antique low-browed gates. From long and close contact with Europeans the natives are civil, and, unmobbed and unmolested, one can wander where one lists; and yet the city has not lost one tittle of its individuality. On pushing one's way through the chattering mob that blocks the gate, bargaining for a farthing's-worth of stale fish, or a mire-smirched shred of sodden cake, or screeching in frantic protest anent the price of some coarse crockery, the nose is assailed by a fell

blast of the extraordinarily various and pungent odours without which China is not China. The narrow slabs that form the footway are deep in slush and offal; on every side yawn open sewers. The, for a time, unaccustomed nasal organ is at home again. Though they have dwelt for years within a bowshot of the Bund, the presiding geniuses of the antique city scorn to adopt new-fangled improvements. The sewers have always been open, and choked, and noisome; the paths have always been slippery and offal-strewn. They disdain the fresh and scentless English quay, the wide, flat, well-kept road, the absence of festering filth. Their conservatism is sublime. But then one is driven to conclude that when Chinamen were made the olfactory nerves were forgotten. One of the most prominent and picturesque objects in Old Shanghai is an immense tea-house which occupies the centre of what the natives would call a lake, but which to a Briton is no better than an unusually large cesspool. Its heavy eaves are glorious with

carving; its high-pitched roofs are curled at the corners in harmonious sweeps and curves; its latticed windows are of the quaintest forms —circular, fan-shaped, everything save square. It is approached by long, zigzag, meandering bridges, which appear to take a malicious pleasure in making the transit across the lake (?) as long as possible. In this tea-house of a hot afternoon, with windows open that no zephyr may be lost, sit groups of gentlemen of the upper class sipping tea and discussing their affairs. They, wealthy enough to enjoy breezy and luxurious and umbrageous country houses if they would, are perfectly satisfied, and are apparently quite unaware of the horrible miasma they are breathing. I had occasion to visit an opulent merchant who possessed a fine collection of Oriental porcelain. His mansion, situated in one of the most malodorous portions of the city, was enclosed within a large square of blank wall, all windows giving upon courts and gardens, none on the sordid street. He was most polite, conducting me

from kiosk to kiosk, each one a museum of treasures. He did the honours of a quaint pleasaunce full of ghostly plants, trained into semblance of pagodas, monsters, men and women, with leafy bodies, and heads and hands of earthenware. In ponds were five-tailed goldfish with protruding eyes; on chairs and tables were spread gala-cloths of uniquely-delicate embroidery, as fine as if painted. When, after the usual tedious ceremonies and mock bashfulness, I had been induced to occupy with deprecatory moans the daïs of honour, tea was brought in cups of such translucent eggshell as I had never looked upon. My host was clad in robes of richest silk, gems glittered on his fingers, and yet, during the half-hour of my visit, it needed all the presence of mind and moral courage that could be mustered, combined with appreciation of decorum to the verge of martyrdom, to prevent me from drawing forth, regardless of consequences, a scented handkerchief and seeking refuge in its folds. One would suppose

that typhoid would be rampant, and yet I am told that it is not so. The fact of the ditches being open may account for this immunity. Certain it is that the face of every second Chinamen one meets is seamed and ploughed by small-pox. They suffer much from the scourge, but apparently few die of it.

There is no end to the interesting sights of Old Shanghai. The curio-shops are fascinating, but prices prohibitive. Rich mandarins occupy their leisure in collecting rare jars, and, since space is limited, are constantly weeding their collections. Thus there is always a certain quantity of good porcelain in the market; but European settlers also collect, and so keep up the prices. Manners and customs may be peacefully studied here, since the appearance of a European produces no excitement, except to the many beggars. Chained to an inner city gate, I beheld one day a prisoner wearing a heavy cangue, or wooden collar. Traffic swept to and fro; nobody heeded him. Yet in theory he was ex-

posed there to public obloquy, as in old days criminals were pilloried at home. Instead of being stoned or pelted, he was quietly being fed by a 'pal' by means of chopsticks out of a saucer. The dimensions of the cangue prevented him from reaching his mouth with his own hands. He seemed perfectly content—maybe he was abnormally hardened, or was it only that his nerves were Mongolian?—and grinned with delight when a humane wayfarer placed his own pipe between his lips *en passant* that he might be consoled with a soothing whiff. He was so mild a criminal that I made bold to ask through an interpreter whether I might have the honour of doing his photograph. Certainly I might—for a consideration. The operation over, he nodded his head so much with joyous gratitude on receipt of a small silver coin that he well-nigh shook off the collar. In return for such recklessly lavish largess I might have photographed him for a week. But all malefactors are not so large-minded. In the yard of the Justice-Yamen was a square wooden

cage, some ten feet long, through the rough bars of which grinned a group, like animals in the Zoo, each ornamented with a cangue. Would these good gentlemen sit for their portraits? Certainly not! At the bare suggestion they gnashed their teeth at me, as the caged tigers do in the streets of Indian cities. Curiously, there was some leaven of shame working within their breasts, or was it only that they deemed their position ludicrous, and objected to chaff from 'devils'? Anyhow, they flouted the idea. It struck me as amusing to pursue this theme, and, the photographic mania being dominant, I made my way to the back of the Yamen, or court of justice, where I was told that a posse of peculiarly evil persons was confined, awaiting *la toilette*, and the attentions of 'Monsieur de Shanghai.' How to get at them? With the usual silver key. The judges were too busy on the bench snapping at victims to interfere with foreign idiosyncrasies—vagaries appropriate to devils. In a certain outer shed, or hutch, sat a shoe-

maker at work. Having been told what was required, and his wits having been sharpened by the receipt of a coin equivalent in value to a sixpence, he smiled—the foreign devil is so incomprehensible a creature!—selected a big key from a bunch, and threw open a door behind him. A small courtyard; at the back a row of dens like dog-kennels. Six or seven wolfish men in rags, with long dirty elf-locks, pates unshaven, flocked forward, rattling their leg-chains, as repulsive a set of ruffians as a student of shady human nature would wish to look upon. A man on a seat at the back was undergoing some dumb form of slow torture with the usual stoicism. The shoemaker pushed back the crowd as roughly as he might a group of importunate hounds. I held out a dollar. With a howl they made a snatch at it with greedy paws. Not yet. Again they were pushed back, and the matter explained to them. The eccentric foreign devil wished to do a photograph. For a dollar? A fortune! For a whole silver

dollar, anything. Would they not be able to drown care in bouts of the beloved samshoo 'twixt now and the moment of flitting? Out with the machine, with its diabolically beaming eye of brass, provided that it would not hurt —an evil-eye with a crystal iris. And if it did hurt, what then? During trial they had learned what pain was. A fig for it! Anything for a silver dollar. We became quite friendly over the glittering silver disc that stood for temporary oblivion; the manner of my new chums was cordial, until all at once their brutish visages grew clouded and glaring, they ground their teeth with covert threats. What was the matter? Unconsciously I had clasped my hands behind me—a trick I have. The shoemaker hastened to unclasp them, and to explain, with apologies, that the action was accidental. It transpired that when their time should come to kneel before 'Monsieur de Shanghai,' they would have to clasp their hands identically thus—indelicate suggestion as to prospects in a near future, tantamount to

insult. They thought that I was slyly guilty of a grim and unseemly jest. Strange, inconsistent creatures, surely more strange than the merely ignorant and eccentric foreign devil! They scoffed at torture and ignominious death; they did not mind being handed down to posterity in prison gear, with unshaven heads, and heavy chains upon their legs. But what did strike home and rouse to resentment latent pride, was the idea of possible impertinent gibing, of being chaffed or laughed at as to the final attitude by the abject barbarian from the West!

Yet another sketch of Chinese horrors. At a remote corner of the city, not far from the Tartar barracks, there is another Justice-Yamen—one rarely visited by foreigners, who, by reason of afore-mentioned odours, make their visits to the old city brief, and do not care to investigate slums. Here there is a large paved courtyard, which, though enclosed, serves as a means of thoroughfare to a species of bazaar or assemblage of booths, as well as to a boys'

school, where the infants scream out their lesson in so loud a key that one wonders they can learn aught in the uproar. In one corner of this yard, in full blaze of a noonday sun, there stood, when I peeped in, a queer erection of rough timber—a square cage, some six feet high, more wide at the bottom than the top, from the apex of which emerged a shiny ball not unlike the head of a man.

This was worth investigating; for passing children, as well as adults, paused for an instant to look, and then, unconcerned, moved on. The head of a man it was, with a high light cast by the sun on its polished surface, passed through a pillory hole, its eyes closed, its cheeks fallen in, its chin resting on a board, its toes just touching the ground. The man was evidently alive, though near his end; for now and again he faintly sighed. Fastened on the machine were two cross-strips of mandarin paper, whereon it was intimated that he or she who was misguided enough to give a scrap of chow-chow, solid or liquid, to

the sentenced one, would be served in like gruesome fashion. Good heavens! Our own Jane Shore was served in a somewhat similar manner—hers a case of mediæval boycotting. The sentence of the man was to be starved to death; and his doom was all but accomplished! I was informed that it takes a strong man, thus treated, six days to escape from his tormenters; an ordinary one from four to five.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOO-CHOW.

If you glance at a good-sized map, you will perceive that the flat country behind Shanghai is a network of streams and canals, and that within an easy distance lies Soo-chow, nick-named the Paris of China.

A kind and artistic friend, belonging to one of the most important mercantile firms of the British settlement, was determined that while under his ægis I should see as much as possible of what was characteristic and interesting; and accordingly arranged to take me to Soo-chow in his house-boat, for on our way thither we should pass through several quaint and unique water-towns, and go over much of the ground made famous by the

Taiping rebellion and the deeds of Chinese Gordon.

The house-boats in use here are not so roomy as those employed on the Min and Yuen-Foo Rivers, because the waterways are narrower, consisting of canals—partly natural, partly artificial—spanned at brief intervals by high stone bridges built of cyclopean stones. The single arch of a canal bridge forms an exact half-circle of the width of the waterway, and is therefore very lofty in the centre. Its upper outline consists of a double flight of stairs meeting in the middle, and the effect of a long canal vista, broken by half a dozen of such bridges, with people running up and down the steps, shaded by paper umbrellas, is as 'Chinese' as the design on a willow-pattern plate. Sometimes through an arch there is a glimpse of a tumble-down village—a loose construction of crazy planks and balconies, supported on rotten poles, sinking slowly but surely towards the water; sometimes a ruinous pagoda rears its hoary head, bereft long ago

of sculptured ornaments, crowned now with scrubby foliage, result of stray seeds dropped by passing birds. The banks of the canals are fortified with immense slabs, which form commodious tow-paths, beyond which are fields of rape and millet, and beyond them a waste that recalls the Norfolk broads. Certainly the landscape hereabouts attains the perfection of hideousness; its monotony is soul-harrowing, growing more hopeless as you progress, and pass into the mean stream which is called the Grand Canal. We have all in childhood been bidden to wonder at the Grand Canal of China, and the Great Wall of that ilk. I suppose that the writers of primers for the young are naïve persons who have never seen anything except the view from their suburban back-parlours which look down into a railway-cutting, and are therefore easily astonished. There is nothing grandiose about either one or the other. The only remarkable thing about them is their length. Were it not for the human element, which is, of course, replete

with entertainment, a journey on these waters would be maddening. Except in the villages, there is but little life to be seen. No cattle, save a few buffaloes used as pack-horses; a group of pedestrians now and then, trudging under great umbrellas; a lady on her travels in a closed chair borne by four bearers, a posse of attendants trotting behind. There is scarce a tree to break the weary line; but instead we come now and again upon elaborately sculptured portals close to the water's edge, erected in memory of some pleasing fact—the visit of an emperor; the virtue of a widow who, through a long life, sought no second husband; some kindred deed of excellence, forbearance, or devotion. You pass, sometimes, a gunboat of the old pattern, species of coastguard to protect the mercantile traffic of the water-highway—a junk built punt-fashion, one tiny gun at the square bow; at the stern a high poop with a quaint house on it like an aquatic sentry-box. As you go by, a savage set of men stare lazily from under a ragged

awning, some in the picturesque baggy dress of soldiers, with tilted hats like their house-roofs, loose breeches, bright fantastic borders and designs on their ample jackets. The peasantry stand much in awe of the Tartar soldiery; for the military are petty tyrants as regards the lower lieges, given, like their betters, to *squeezing*. At night you can tell the adjacent presence of a police-boat in spite of darkness; for there is a constant din kept up with gongs and tomtoms, as if to say, 'Malefactors, beware! evil spirits, avaunt! Here we are, wide awake and vigilant.' So, also, can the boat of a mandarin be instantly detected; for he, unlike lesser personages, burns twinkling lamps at his prow, by whose light you mark the glint of spears and pewter-headed procession-staves. There are bits of red cloth fluttering from mast and cordage; showers of joss-paper fizz and burn on the water as protection against sprites. Few travel after dark, except foreign devils on a holiday, whose leave of absence is brief. It is somewhat dangerous work; for

ordinary boats at rest are not particular as to place of anchorage, and illumination there is none, save that vouchsafed by heaven. Against stream it is necessary to track—a slow and monotonous proceeding, whereby a party of three or four drag a rope along the tow-path, wading across side-creeks, shouting cries of warning, receiving in return anathema from disturbed sleepers whose gear has got entangled.

If there are miles of dulness, these are amply compensated by the uproar which ensues when the foreign house-boat reaches a village. The inhabitants turn out *en masse*—they hold out their claws for backsheesh; in their eagerness for lucre they push each other into the water. One morning we espied a Confucian temple, and landed to investigate. To reach it we were obliged to pass through a school, whereupon the edifying hum as of busy bees very hard at work rose to a yell. Books were flung in the air; the studious gathering broke up in confusion, each urchin scuffling

and tumbling over the other in the wild anxious race to be first at the temple-door, and earn some copper cash by opening it. Ultimately all, with shrill screams and convulsed palms, claimed equal reward, and pursued us in a mob to the boat. Our host, who is master of the hopeless tongue which obtains in these parts, amused himself by bantering them. He wagged long strings of copper cash, such as caused mouths to water, and eyes to gush forth with salt tears of agony; then deliberately locked them away. Oh, the anguish, the ugly lines of premature avarice, depicted on the plump young cheeks! Three little lads, aged from seven to ten, screamed with rage at being balked. Their eyes were swelled with saline drops, while the corners of their lips twitched as might those of a circumvented miser. Of a surety the Celestials are a repulsive race. Industry and integrity in business are weighed down in the scale by greed, avarice, and vanity. Money is the *summum bonum*. For a few cash they will do almost

anything. On one occasion we found difficulty in securing a small boat wherewith to explore some creeks. A sampan floated by, laden with stacks of millet, on the way to market. For a string of cash, worth, perhaps, fivepence, the boatmen postponed their expedition, and paddled us where we would, regardless of the flight of time. The market could wait for a few hours, and fivepence was to be earned meanwhile.

On the Soo-chow highway there is an old and interesting town, by name Tsing-Poo, which is a cross between Venice and Amsterdam. It is a walled city of considerable size. Within, the rows of houses hang over a foul and sluggish stream on props supporting wooden balconies, while stone staircases lead to the water, where a multitude of craft are moored. Access is obtained through two circular watergates, one at either end, provided with heavy timber doors, which are closed at sundown—their width so exiguous that only small boats can enter. The gates are double,

with, aloft, an open space between, through which to hurl stones on a craft that would enter without permission. During the day a man squats in a niche, armed with a long landing-net, in which he receives the toll whereby permission of ingress is obtained. The walls are full of rents. The town is dilapidated—more than half deserted; for it was the scene of many a hard-fought conflict during the Taiping rebellion. Alternately, the Imperial yellow flag waved from the now crumbled battlements, and that of the rebels who sought to overthrow the dominion of the Tartars. Being the key to the Grand Canal, with opulent Soo-chow close by, Tsing-Poo was taken and retaken, and since then has been but partially rebuilt. As at Venice, there is a wide main avenue, from which branch canals so narrow that overhead there is but a strip of sky. Bridges, like tiny Rialtos, are crowded with boatmen, peasants, market-women; and so big do they loom in the miniature streets, as to remind one of

Gulliver's Brobdignag. The houses and balconies (all made of wood) are so small as to look like toys; their colour is of brown planed timber, mellowed and grayed by age. It is perilous travelling in these narrow ways; for, as in certain pictures of Hogarth's, filth is flung from the windows, slops are emptied from the balconies. Women, crouched on the stone steps, are busy washing their scarlet buckets. Some drop them from a high casement with a string; others, in the same manner, wash rice in baskets, oblivious of the quality of the stream, whose glutinous liquid is of so offensive a description as to call for the perfumed handkerchief. But what are stenches—mere local colour—in presence of such pictures as would delight a Teniers or a Steen? What glimpses into half-lit interiors, with wee yards beyond, brightened by a tulip or a lily—a hot glow and a curl of azure smoke illumining the darkness between! What groups lolling over a quaintly sculptured barrier! What effects of vivid light and

darkest shade as fresh, ruddy faces gaze shyly from a casement! Verily, one might be in some unexpected bit of Holland. The women are Dutch in feature, their heads swathed tight in folds of black or blue; their complexions fair and bright—very good-looking some. The men, for the most part naked, are splendid in physique. Almost as light-coloured as Europeans, they might pass as such but for the shaven crown and pigtail coiled round the brow like a chaplet. A few months spent at Tsing-Poo by a clever painter of *genre* would provide him with material for life, and such material as would burst fresh on a jaded public as something entirely new. There was a fascination about this crumbled copper-coloured town, with its vivacious, merry populace and wonderful side-vistas of toppling architecture mirrored in murky water—its relics of vanished importance and tell-tale scars of war—that kept us paddling for many hours regardless of the evil savours, until the lowering sun warned us to pass the water-

gate ere it was closed, and rejoin our house-boat in the moat.

The occupants of the villages and towns on the Grand Canal are cheery and civil; pleasant enough until the question of Cum-sha, or backsheesh, turns their milk of human kindness sour. If you sit sketching, they will stand on the bank, round-eyed, still as dolls, all day, untiring. If you produce your camera, they will be seized with panic, and, howling, take refuge on the central height of a bridge, and from that point of vantage reconnoitre warily. Perceiving that it does not go off or blow anybody up, they will scamper back again with a louder howl, endeavour to poke fingers down the lens, insist upon opening the slides which contain the sensitive plates. More than once, to save my precious camera from ruin, I have run off with it encircled in my arms along a towpath, more fleet of foot than they.

It is a lazy life, journeying on the Grand Canal—smoking, sleeping, eating, sketching,

idly watching the Soo-chow boats as they sweep down with the current at a tremendous pace, cleverly timing the dropping of sail and lowering of mast so as to swoop under a bridge by force of their 'way on,' and 'up-sail' and onward without losing a tittle of their speed. The masts are uncommonly tall, the sails long and narrow, for the banks in some places are somewhat high, and the wind must be caught above their level. A lazy life, and a pleasant one, if solaced by a cheery companion. When weary of sitting or lolling, you land and walk for miles along a towpath, paved sometimes with marble, passing heaps of bricks at intervals, which tell where once there was a village, laid low in the Taiping trouble. On this account the stretch between Tsing-Poo and Soo-chow is strangely desolate and sad. You may walk for miles without seeing a human face. Ruin everywhere—the footprint of the avenger in a track of wreck and fire.

By degrees the tediousness of the melancholy landscape acts upon your nerves—its

lack of detail sickens the eye as the long-drawn trail of destruction sickens the heart. There is not a tree, but here and there a bush. This paltry ribbon of water will surely never end. You take refuge in the cabin, pull down the blinds, and by help of a favourite author cheat slow-footed Time.

Soo-chow at last—the central scene of Gordon's prowess. The book is tossed under a table, and we emerge on deck to gaze on such a picture of novelty as puts dreariness to flight. Evidently an immense city this, with beetling, interminable walls broken by loopholes, standing in a wide sheet of water. The walls are well kept, but of such flimsy structure as to be of no use against artillery. We sail on and on, tacking at corners. Acres of wall without an entrance gate! Yes; there is one gate, and two tiny posterns; but all three are so masked by booths perched on a shelving bank and a myriad of boats, that without diligent search they are invisible.

It was evening, and cool, when we came

upon Soo-chow, and as the gate is always shut at five, we spent the pleasant hours looking about us. Scattered on the mainland one could see villas, or rather, the high boundaries by which villas are surrounded. The moat, or rather lake, was alive with craft: small junks, ferry-boats, long heavy barges elaborately gilt, rowed by many rowers, reminding one of the historic vessel on which the Doges used to wed the Adriatic—clumsy and unwieldy, but in their way how beautiful, backed by the mellow hue of the beetling battlements and crocus sunset! On the prows, in guise of figure-heads, were towering dragons with protruding eyes and horns—along the roof other huge monsters—gay streamers and banners fluttering. Inside a sort of omnibus, whose windows were divided by rows of gilded posts, sat lovely ladies, beautified with much white paint, their hair bedizened with chaplets of fresh marigolds. On the little poop astern was an orchestra, discoursing blithely the peculiar music of China. How fairy-like and hilariously dissipated a

spectacle after the weariful Grand Canal! The rich inhabitants of villas were enjoying themselves—and in a laudably rational manner, too. Their eyes were delighted with gorgeous raiment, flowers, lavish gold and silken cushions, to say nothing of a superb sky; their ears were entranced with Chinese music; and they breathed meanwhile a cooler, fresher air than was possible by day. Doubtless they would retire at dark into the villas, and regale on snails and birds'-nest and crows'-tongues and dog-cutlets, washed down with Ho-tsu, aristocratic tipple. These were the families of Dives, mind you, with souls above vulgar Samshoo. The Paris of China! Of a truth the Celestial Parisians seemed as capable of taking life lightly as the European ones, if laughter and smiles and harmony and a smirking aspect of content may grease the wheels of existence.

The spectacle was pleasing, but not exciting, for the Bucentaure barges rowed round and round the walls with the same concomitants of smirks and bows and instrumental festivity.

To us it was new; to them apparently not, for by way of relaxation they never do anything else. Their lives are *bornées*, and, since ignorance is bliss, they enjoy themselves doubtless very much, knowing no better. I dare say, in Eden it was somewhat dull, or would have been, if, after eating of the tree of experience, its two inhabitants had been allowed to stop there.

On the opposite bank, over against the only city gate, there is a suburb, occupied by Lazarus, more noisy and dirty even than such spots generally are, which never sleeps, but during all the twenty-four hours is a centre of shrill commotion. To bivouac in so turbulent a neighbourhood would be a mistake, we unanimously voted. Accordingly we anchored on the quiet side of the moat, set a watch to circumvent possible marauders, and slept soundly, looking forward to the morrow.

One Chinese city is much like another, for the main characteristics are the same in all. Public buildings, in our acceptation of the

expression, there are none, for streets are too narrow to make it worth while to spend time and money on a façade. Hence ingenuity, wealth, and taste are expended on the insides of temples or palaces.

The squalor and filth, the crowding of peripatetic vendors of mean merchandise, the mob of noisy hucksters, the mud-hovels on the greasy bank, the lean pigs and hens, the army of dirty, screaming viragos—prepare one little for the scene which meets the view on passing under the low-browed entrance-gate of the Paris of China. The streets—as narrow as usual—are comparatively clean. The shops are roomy and handsome, each standing in its own courtyard; the display of goods is sumptuous. If a city of pleasure, it is also one of business, for traffic is brisk and incessant. It is more genuinely native than any place I have yet visited, for there is absolutely nothing to remind one of the West. Indeed, we two are probably the only Europeans within the walls. The display in furs is fine—pelisses of unborn

lamb, rugs dexterously made in mosaic patterns of many shades of skin, overcoats lined with the thick tiger-skin of the North; sables from Vladivostock; silver sea-otter from Yezo. The chief source of trade, though, is silk, and very lovely are the specimens which are unrolled for our benefit. The silk stuffs of China are much superior to those of Japan. The material is so solid that it seems as if it would wear till doomsday, and yet it is delightfully soft. The colours are always good. It is the juxtaposition of inharmonious tones which makes Chinese costume garish. The Japanese silk, on the other hand, is hard and *crinkly* from the gum employed to add weight; it falls into bad folds, and the colours are sometimes harsh. At Kiyôto I visited many of the weavers in their homes, was shown the very best results of their labours—stuffs specially manufactured for the curtains of the Mikado's new palace. They were gorgeous, brocaded sometimes with real gold; but in all cases they were hard to the touch, and often (one

would not expect it in artistic Japan) ugly and crude in tone. Since embroidery is a favourite and important branch of Chinese industry, it is not the fashion to weave patterns in colour, and by this the materials are the gainers. A full design worked in varied shades of the same colour as that of the ground gives exceeding richness to long robes, and is not distracting to the eye.

Stern sumptuary laws obtain in the Middle Kingdom, regulating the costume of the various grades of society. There are so many dignitaries and persons of high rank dwelling in Soo-chow, and moving afoot, that the number of splendid silken dresses in the street is a fresh and delightful feature. Elsewhere the mandarin of an upper grade disdains to walk; indeed, the jostling of dirty coolies with unclean loads would make such a habit impossible. Here, where things are better ordered, he marches solemnly along, preceded and followed by his retinue, his blue or red button of rank, and handsome collar of amber and coral, glitter-

ing and gleaming in the sun. As might be expected, there are many shops devoted to the sale of fans, delicately painted, some of them, and encrusted with cornelian and pearls. The curio shops, too, are terribly fascinating, the prices generally lower than at Canton or Peking. Unusual though it be for foreigners to parade the thoroughfares, the people are polite, and abstain from the savage mobbing and hustling of the citizens of the Fohkien Province. The high-class shop-people appeared to take pleasure in displaying their best things, and instructing the benighted barbarian in the beauties of Celestial art-work. Unfortunately, it was impossible to buy anything, because we were provided with Shanghai bank-notes only, presuming that such would pass current at so short a distance from the Treaty port. But no. Having argued and bargained for hours over a few choice specimens of porcelain, we were compelled at last to resign them, for the merchants stared at the notes, consulted their friends, asked advice of their neighbours, and

finally handed them back with shakings of head and wagging of pigtail as something uncanny, if not fraudulent.

The most interesting object in Soo-chow is the palace of the magnate of Ningpo. That Grand Bashaw being away at his post, he obligingly throws open house and grounds for the recreation of his fellow-townsmen, who gladly avail themselves of the privilege. Following the usual custom, it stands in a densely-populated portion of the town, and is surrounded by a high wall like a prison. On entering and crossing a paved courtyard, you are surprised by the strange shapes of the windows of the principal building, or *corps de logis.* On one side is a species of colonnade filled in with a fine design of bamboo foliage in most minutely delicate tracery, the material coloured porcelain. Insects crawl over the stems, painted as in life. The building consists of a central hall, from which small chambers open out — presumably bedrooms. The windows are alternately shaped like fans

or gourds, and are glazed with oyster-shells scraped thin, which have the appearance of tissue-paper. A few magnificent old bronzes are ranged round the walls; lanterns of various shapes, adorned with a profusion of tassels, hang from the low ceiling; there is no furniture, nor are there doors. The doorways are circular. In this hall there are stationed attendants, who present to each new-comer scalded towels—cloths, that is, that have been dipped in scalding water and wrung—and with these he proceeds to dab his face and hands.

Moving onward, he finds himself in a garden, with two or three small houses and some kiosks dotted among the foliage. Each house, it was explained, is for the use of a branch of the family, so that all may dwell together, and yet be in some sort independent. The garden is cut up into various levels by a tortuous and labyrinthine rockery made of clinkers and pieces of rough stone, varied by pools and canals, or, rather, puddles and gutters, of dirty opaque water. There is no attempt at lawn, or sward,

or flower-bed. Flowers there are, and beautiful ones, in pots, and some of the shrubs bear blossoms. The landscape-gardener seems to have set himself the task of seeing how many ups and downs he could introduce, how many funny little bridges, and passages leading nowhere. There is a kiosk at the extreme end of the pleasure-ground, poised on a height, in which is a valuable collection of vases of the Ming period, dusty and neglected. To arrive at this kiosk it is necessary to cross at least half a dozen bridges, and make as many detours on a space of ground which you should be able to cover in a dozen steps. By order of their absent lord, the retainers are vastly civil, providing tea in dainty little cups *ad libitum*. In some of the kiosks were private picnic-parties dining, who had brought their own viands. There was one very smart party, consisting of a young mandarin and a bevy of damsels, into whose retreat we plunged as if by accident, and, having seen them at close quarters, chin-chinned ourselves out with profuse apologies.

The young man was tall and handsome, and wore his robes right royally. His dress was of pale-brown flowered silk, with a short over-vest, sleeveless, of brilliant geranium. From a sash hung a gilded fan, and a pipe with its appendages inlaid with silver, and a variety of nicknacks carved in jade. A Celestial masher this, whose opportunities in the way of many-tinted bravery would turn his London brother green with envy. The damsels were painted like clowns ; their hair was stiffened with pomatum into wings, and stuck like a pincushion with enormous artificial flowers. Each lady was attended by two handmaidens—for her to lean upon, it was explained—her feet being so tottery and so truly like the lotus-bud that she could only move supported on either side.

A female missionary, by the way, whom I met on a steamer once, told me that a certain lady of rank had shown her a foot unstockinged. The skin was broken in many places. The victim averred that from the age of nine she had never been out of pain ; moreover, from

want of exercise, she suffered from indigestion and dyspepsia; and yet the martyrdom is voluntary, and patiently endured. The reigning dynasty, being Tartars, do not squeeze their feet, and efforts have been made from time to time to do away with the barbarous practice. But custom and expediency are stronger than Imperial mandates. Fashion here, as in the West, is an autocrat. The marriage-makers (a distinct class) declare that a maiden's chance of a good husband depends on the amount of pressure brought to bear on her unfortunate pedal extremities. If she aspires to a millionnaire, her foot must be two inches long. After all, these maidens are no more ridiculous than our own, who pinch their waists and distort their figures under an absurd impression that the men will admire them the more.

CHAPTER IX.

PEKING.

By steamer of China Merchants Company from Shanghai northward across the Yellow Sea, round the point of Shan-Tung, into the Gulf of Pechili, past the Taku Forts (key of Peking), and up the Pei-ho River to Tientsin —a journey of five days.

As usual in these latitudes, I am the only European passenger, and, therefore, mess with the captain and officers, kindly if homely Scotchmen, who are easily drawn out as to their experiences. Any glimpse, however slight, of the high and mighty in the land is interesting, for Europeans have no chance of mixing in any Chinese society higher than that of the merchants. This very steamer was

selected the other day for the honour of transporting the father of the Cousin of the Moon and Brother of the Planets to Cheefoo, where a grand naval and military review was to take place in his presence. To the British mind such a function suggests getting up very early, rushing about in dust and heat, struggling into an excursion train, a long and weary day on a yacht or steamer with an accompaniment of deafening noise and blinding smoke, and nothing whatever to be seen; a total absence of refreshments, a woful return with aching bones, and a solemn vow never to be such an idiot any more. The grand function at Cheefoo was quite a different affair. In the first place it was a new departure, a concession to the manners and customs of the West initiated by the Imperial family and its chief minister. Chun, the seventh prince, father of the reigning Emperor, was actually to emerge from the monastic seclusion of the Forbidden City of Peking, and mix with the lower lieges, an act of enlightened condescension for which there

was no precedent since the days of the Emperor Kien-Lung. The minister Li-Hung-Chang, who practically 'rules the roast,' is enlightened far beyond other Chinamen. It is clear to him, if not to others, that while the Middle Kingdom has been resting on the laurels culled a thousand years ago, the world has been creeping on. The blackened ruins of the Summer Palace point a moral, from which he is not above learning. Without sacrificing aught of the dignity of the mighty nation he represents, he has deigned to call in barbarian officers for the drilling of his troops, has armed the Taku Forts with guns from the foundry of Krupp, and it will not be his fault if ever the lock of Peking's gate is again picked with a British sword. All this is the more to be admired in that he loves foreigners no more than his compatriots. He is jealous and suspicious of the white race, and is all the more ready to dissect the brains of Europeans so as to turn, if need be, their own weapons against themselves. He is always ready to receive in

audience any 'foreigner of distinction;' and when your interview is over, and you reflect upon what has passed, you are somewhat humiliated and discomfited to find that you have imparted a good deal of information to the urbane man of middle age with the bright eyes and intellectual brow, and that you have yourself reaped nothing in exchange. He has sucked you like an orange, and when there is no more juice, calmly flings away the skin with a polite bow of dismissal.

Now, what passes within the precincts of the Forbidden City is, of course, a dead letter to barbarians. A European ambassador, who had sojourned for years in Peking, told me that he had never succeeded in ascertaining who it was that pulled the strings. The Emperor, being a youth, is a puppet, and despite recent proclamations, will probably continue to be guided for some time to come. The Empress Dowager, who is known to be energetic, ambitious, and strong-minded, would appear, for the present at least, to be the motive power.

But then there is Prince Kung, the uncle, an extremely brilliant man; and Chun, the father, who has the reputation of being large-minded and clever of head. The ostensible director of affairs is Li-Hung-Chang, and it may be gathered that the triumvirate within the palace gave their minister rope in the matter of reforms, and after a while became alarmed at his sweeping measures, and that it was to put himself right in the eyes of the trio that the review at Cheefoo was organized. It was necessary that someone other than Li-Hung-Chang should report on the results of the changes, and to that end the lot fell upon Prince Chun, who forthwith sallied forth to reconnoitre.

The interior of our trim little steamer was partially gutted for the occasion. Partitions of side-cabins were removed; sumptuous embroideries were draped about behind bowers of shrubs and flowers. The powerful minister, with characteristic tact, 'effaced' himself. Perhaps he had read of Wolsey and King Henry,

and the latter's jealous wrath at the Cardinal's almost regal magnificence. Be that as it may, Li took a humble cabin forward, leaving the entire space usually allotted to the first class for the convenience of the Emperor's papa. The rules of strict etiquette being waived—how can one be punctilious when suffering from *mal de mer?*—our captain saw a good deal of the mighty one, and was able to take a back-stairs view, as it were, of the ways that obtain in the palace.

Prince Chun, he said, is a middle-aged man of fine presence and extreme dignity of carriage, but curiously ignorant of the world. Small things enchanted him as baubles do a child. Until this occasion he had never seen a European, had never looked upon a boat, would stare for hours at that strange new spectacle, the ocean. How astonishing is it to realize that those who have at their beck the lives and happiness of millions; who have but to raise a finger for the heads of the noblest to fall; whose lightest word is law, from which

there is no appeal, should sit like invisible spiders in a web, shut off from the busy world, with no practical experience of its wants, its desires, its yearnings, issuing autocratic mandates from the recesses of a monastic garden! And yet, preposterous as it should seem, the system appears to work well, and as one contemplates it, the fashionable modern jargon anent enlightenment and education of the masses sounds like mere jingle. No doubt the coolie class is ground down and squeezed; but are the evils from which they suffer worse or as bad as those by which Europe is distressed? The Middle Kingdom enjoys peace but rarely broken. Every man knows that, however lowly his origin, there is nothing to check his rise to the loftiest posts in the state. More often than not ministers who have skilfully directed the helm have risen from the ranks. We of the West fume and fret and strain, to die early in throes of abortive effort or to join the crowds that fill the lunatic asylums. The Chinese plod quietly on in the grooves which

their ancestors found good. 'Let us alone,' they say; 'we are well enough as we are, and do not want your progress. We have no newspapers except the official *Peking Gazette*. We never write letters if we can help it. A few telegraph wires have crept into use, chiefly for official purposes. We know that railways are flurrying nuisances, telegraphs and penny postage far from unmixed blessings. Cultivated Europe is torn by Socialism, distracted by dynamite, ruthless cold-blooded murder on a scale unknown to us, worried by the starvation of the unemployed. We starve too, sometimes, and bear it without outcry. China may be asleep, but she is more content than you.'

Happily the waves behaved themselves during Prince Chun's first trip at sea. He shut himself up for a while, disconcerted by the throb of the engine, the smell of oil, the slight rolling from side to side, but was able presently to emerge and conduct himself as became his station. Supposing he had been

sea-sick, what rules of etiquette would apply? Would his fate have been akin to that of the Spanish Queen who fell into the fire and died because no one was at hand who was privileged to touch her person? The prince brought his state on board with him. He wore a dress of plain dark yellow. His attendants wore robes of yellow also, gradating in paler shades according to their rank. He was accompanied by a bodyguard of youthful nobles, who stood round at attention while he dined, and were afterwards fed with the crumbs that fell from the great man's table. It is well to be able to chronicle that the expedition was a success. The seventh prince returned home delighted with all he had seen, prepared to report favourably on all points. How amusing to have followed him into the Forbidden City; to have stood by unseen while he related his adventures! 'What travellers' tales!' Perhaps, having sniffed a breath of freedom, he may become restive. What if, some day, bored out of equanimity, he should turn on

the august Empress Dowager, and obstinately demand a latch-key?*

Cheefoo, where we stayed a day for reasons connected with cargo, is not a pleasing spot. Situated in a bay which forms a natural harbour, it possesses a long stretch of fine sand, and on that account has grown into a bathing resort much affected by the Europeans of Shanghai. There are two European, or, rather, American, hotels upon the strand; two missionary palaces—missionary dwellings in these parts always catch the eye before less ambitious abodes—behind a row of arid hills. As a place of villegiatura it must be exceeding dismal; but then the unlucky settlers at Shanghai are thankful for small mercies.

Past the Taku Forts, into the Pei-ho, the water highway, to the queerest capital on earth, and the highway thither well-nigh as queer. It is a low muddy river, exasperatingly tortuous, beset with shifting sands that are for

* Since the above was penned Prince Chun has made other journeys.

ever playing practical jokes with the craft that would move up-stream. The riparian population, too, are gifted with a sense of humour. They persistently moor their crazy vessels across the channel and decline to budge, fervently praying to be run down; for they know right well that if run into the craft will tumble to pieces like touchwood; that they will in consequence obtain heavy damages wherewithal to obtain new junks. Like many other rotten things, the old junks are very picturesque, with high-built poops and pointed bows, decked out in brightest colours. The country on each side of the Pei-ho is flat, with here and there a squalid village made of mud. Indeed, everything here is of one dun hue—water, banks, villages, people—as monotonously brown as the Nile. Children and men are completely nude. Trees there are next to none. The hideous landscape is rendered more revolting by the twists and turns and stoppages, and a constant sticking in the mire. Slowly, slowly, we crawl onward, the same landmarks visible

for hours, the captain steering with his own hands, for the task is one requiring delicate manipulation. Now and again he pours forth a volley of abuse at some boatman more obstinate or more crafty than his fellows. Presently he scratches his head and gives up the hopeless task. We are stuck fast. Tientsin lies many miles beyond. No matter. These mishaps are of daily occurrence. Seeing that we do not arrive to time, the agent will guess what has transpired. A steam launch will be sent for mails. Cargo will be dragged over the muddy flat in carts. The Chinese passengers will reach their destination as they may. There is no use in fretting. Travelling in these seas, one has long ago accepted the fact that time is no object, just as one has grown to do, for weeks at a time, without letters or newspapers. It is odd that the desire for either seems for a time to die out easily, or rather to smoulder. One leaves a port knowing that it will be impossible to receive fresh news from home for at least a

month. One resigns one's self and is content; but then, within distance of the next depot, what a reaction! Good gracious! Letters the day after to-morrow! On landing, the first rush is to the post-office. Epistles are hastily conned and pocketed for more careful perusal later, ere the mind can be brought back to the present and the inevitable list of 'sights.' Verily, blessed are the friends at home who forget not to give of their plenty; who, in the midst of the London hurly-burly, find time to remember the absent!

If Cheefoo is a dreadful place, what may be said of Tientsin?

A mean narrow wharf, backed by a few paltry warehouses; merchandise, cases, barrels, piled high, impeding the way at every step. Dust, heat, glare. On the Bund a primitive hostelry, a kind of backwoods shanty, filled to the brim with German officers, instructors of the Chinese army. Desolate and heart-sick, even more lonely and uncomfortable than usual, I sat me down in the veranda. At what a

fearsome spot had I arrived, with what a terrible journey before me! Why have I never learned the wisdom of staying at home? I muttered. The most dreary spot, this, to which I had ever penetrated. Yet no. In the gruesome present one should not be unjust to the terrible past.

Calmly, in cold blood, in the clear light of retrospect, the palm shall be given to Cedar Keys, a port in Florida from which you embark for Havana. Reflecting (an experience happily gone by) on the horrors of a night at Cedar Keys, with a tame boar irrupting into one's bedroom through a doorway which might not be closed, a steaming dunghill outside the window, centipedes and scorpions perambulating on the filthy floor, smoke from the kitchen fire arising like incense between the boards, I became quite cheerful; and when the civil landlord came out presently with a suggestion that, since there is nothing worth seeing at Tientsin, I should start off on the morrow, I felt inclined

to say, 'Mine host, you are too modest. Here will I tarry for a month.'

Nobody stops at Tientsin, he composedly remarked, who can possibly escape out of it. It is too late to start to-day, and, besides, there will be many details for us to see to. Being a man, you will presumably ride across country. It is eighty miles as the crow flies. Ladies reach the capital by boat, but that is maddeningly slow.

I would sit at the feet of mine host, I gratefully declared, and by him be instructed at his leisure.

'It is a severe journey,' he said, 'but well worth the ordeal. From the moment that you cross the bridge of boats yonder in the native town, you may be said to have arrived in China. Hitherto your experiences have been more or less modified by extraneous influences. Beyond that bridge of boats it is China *pur et simple.*'

'But,' I objected, somewhat hurt, 'surely Soo-chow is China *pur et simple?*'

'Yes; but this is different. This is the China of the north, swept by the wild winds of the Tartar steppes, inhabited by a race unlike that of the south or centre in almost all things. A rough, half-savage, devil-may-care race, with knives loose in the sheath for enemies; cheery and courteous to friends. Among them you are perfectly safe, unless yourself the aggressor. They are told no lies and fables by the spiteful *literati*. You are to them a stranger of whom they have heard nothing, welcome or not, according to your conduct.'

This was pleasant news, for one grows tired of being reviled and stoned, treated like the obnoxious rat. Presently there appeared upon the scene a gentle giant, tall, and broad of beam, and widely grinning. He informed me in pigeon-English, with child-like laughter and a merry twinkle of the eye, that he was my Mafoo, groom and guide in one, and would be glad to have his orders. He had two horses —amazing miracles of horses—that had not been out for days. With them we should

cover the eighty miles of waste in no time. We would start at five in the morning. The practical energy of my new Tartar myrmidon took my breath away. I have got luggage, I said, and a Canton servant.

With a frown of disgust he spat out his displeasure.

'Canton, ugh!' he grunted, and glared at the said domestic with hatred undisguised. The latter had at this juncture entered, but, sniffing danger, innocently strolled round the corner. Now did I begin to realize the fitness of things. For months my life had been as bran in the mouth by reason of my Canton servant, and now I was about to be revenged.

Sung, a round-eyed southerner with a tight parchment-like yellow skin and idiotic expression, was replete with knavish imbecility. If he had a thing to do, he invariably did it wrong. If he was told to be specially careful of some article, he was sure to stumble into the room with mouth open and eyes dazed by opium, and the shattered object in his hand.

If bidden to do something that was inconvenient, a sad pensive look like that of a ship's figure-head stole over his features, and he altogether declined to comprehend. If bidden to tie up a parcel which contained something precious that would spoil, and deposit it carefully somewhere, he stalked dreamily along, swinging it on the end of a finger, and so knotted the string that it invariably gave way and discharged paper and contents in a puddle.

One of his duties was to pay bills, and as few foreigners can pretend to cope with the spoken tongue—much less with the written character—I was at his mercy, and he knew it. I found out later that he always exacted the double of what was set down. If, exasperated beyond bearing, I pitched into him, he became miraculously deaf, and after an interval of stolid silence would hold out his claw and nod with dawning intelligence.

'Yes,' he would cry in sudden jubilation, with a beaming smile like that of the roseate

aurora, 'massa quite right! He owe me a dollar for chow-chow!'

Many a time had I been tempted to seize him by his skinny throat and soundly shake him. But, after all, why waste temper and time? The globe-trotter must submit to be robbed. Now my time was come. Sung and the new Mafoo were natural enemies; the latter was tall and stalwart, bursting with contempt —and my wrongs would be amply avenged.

Natives of north and south speak different languages, and can only communicate by means of pigeon-English. Hence I could enjoy my triumph, and appreciate the menaces of an internecine strife, which lasted as long as they were together.

'That boy,' cried the Mafoo, pointing with contemptuous finger, 'he take luggage and start now in cart; he travel all night—chop-chop—quick!—number one topside cart. No springs —no road—much dirt.'

Sung screamed and shook his head, vowing he had relations whom it was most important

he should visit. But I had now, with malicious glee, abdicated my authority, and he had found a sterner master. When he put on the pensive air, it was speedily knocked out of him by a smart blow from a leg-of-mutton fist between the shoulders. On the first application he was so surprised that his mouth opened like that of a thrushling in a nest, and no sound came thence. Furtively he rubbed his back against the wall, and, after due reflection, was henceforth cowed. During the journey across the dreadful plain we came upon the cart at intervals. It was always jolting through a simoon of dust, and the head of the wretched Sung, begrimed, perspiring, was waggling on its skinny neck as if about to tumble off. He was allowed no rest. When, half crippled, he arrived and descended with evident pain at a halting-place, where I and the Tartar had been lunching, he was bidden to make haste and be off again. To his weary sigh his tyrant retorted by a snort. During that awful pilgrimage the long list of his sins was wiped out one

by one. It was 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,' and I fairly laughed in his face when he remarked, with a conviction born of settled despair: 'Me no liky Peking. Me no cam to see him any more.'

The Mafoo turned out a delightful companion, always laughing and singing, never put out by accidents, except when my pony fell down, which he did frequently. Nor was it the poor beast's fault. In quality of guide, the Tartar rode in front at a hand gallop, his pigtail streaming in the wind, urging his steed forward by banging its flanks with a fan, regardless of rough ground or obstacles. The excessive heat of mid-day made the animals giddy, and from being miracles of speed they soon became abject wrecks, sinking rather than falling on their noses, and refusing to be dragged upon their feet. In spite of troubles, however, and a necessary rest during the torrid hours, we reached the capital at two on the second day, whereas the ride is usually spread over three days. I did not regret the high-

pressure proceedings of the Mafoo, for the stopping-places on the way are appalling.

As we sped onward, carolling blithely, the mind of the guide was never a blank. He was always turning over something that I had said, striving to fit it to his own experience; and, usually failing in the effort, would suddenly come to a dead halt, seeking for more pabulum. My country exercised him much.

'How far off?'

'Forty thousand miles.'

'How much a mile?'

'About as far as from where we last stopped to here.'

A long-drawn whistle, and knitting of brow, and blinking of eyes, and quite a lengthy gallop without a word. Then a stop.

'In Engel-land you have much tigers?'

'No.'

'Much camels—woolly ones, like ours on the steppes?'

'Haven't seen any yet.'

'Ah! wait till we go to the Great Wall;

and then, in the Nankow Pass, much camel —nothing else.'

Presently :

'You take me with you back to Engelland ?'

'You would not like it if I did.'

'Ah !'—a long-drawn *ah* this time—'you no go back at all. You likee better stop with us !'

And then whack ! Off in triumph, to rein in suddenly, and, chuckling, point backward with his fan. On the dim horizon, the martyr Sung, with his poor top-heavy head wobbling, doing penance on the rumbling tumbrel for his manifold iniquities.

We left Tientsin at five in the morning, and rode till nine, sometimes following the bends of the Pei-ho, with its long strings of junks laboriously tracking ; sometimes making cuts through low-lying crops of wheat and barley, growing skimpily. By the river-side were many tea-places for the use of travellers, consisting of scraps of ragged awning stretched

on bamboos; underneath, improvised seats of brick, a few dirty cups, and a kettle always on the boil. Nothing could be more civil than the peasantry. Wherever there was a meagre tree, there was someone sitting in its shade, who looked up, chinchinned, and lolled again. The skin of the men, from constant exposure without clothing, is burned nearly black. Now and then you come upon an encampment rather than a village—a miserable assemblage of mud-hovels, surrounded by a palisade of bamboo, within which is a large dirt-pie, where a host of naked children, a goat, and a few half-plucked hens are gambolling. The women who do the field-work are fully clothed in jacket and trousers of blue cotton, and are, oddly enough, small-footed; their feet, that is, are compressed, but not sufficiently so to impede their power of locomotion. Thus in north and south things are reversed; for here the upper class, being Tartars, are all large-footed, and their feet seem larger than they are, because they affect a flat black shoe raised on a central patten.

The halt for rest is a grave matter. In every village of any size there is an inn, or rest-house, which consists of an enclosure or muddy yard, entered through double gates, with, at the extreme opposite end, a row of rooms opening upon the yard. In each of these chambers—stone-floored—is a brick bed-place, covered with a mat, and a stove below for heating in winter — a seething hotbed of vermin—also a rickety table, and two high-backed chairs. These rooms, lighted through paper windows, are for the quality. Grooms, stable-boys, itinerant pedlars, servants, bivouac in the open with their horses, ponies, and mules. At night there is a carnival of din, for donkeys are braying, horses neighing, ponies kicking, and the attendant grooms keep up guttural shouts of exhortation, or break into song—a sort of maddening dirge—between intervals of heavy slumber, rocked by coughs and snores. There is a species of lazy interest in counting the various sounds. They are so numerous that it is possible sometimes

to detect in the medley two dozen distinct noises.

The result is, of course, feverish sleeplessness and nerves overstrung on the top of bodily fatigue. During the mid-day rest one seeks in vain to snatch forty winks and steal a march on exhaustion ; grooms and pedlars poke holes of observation through the paper, fling wide the doors, invade the apartment by way of being friendly, and bring in a baby or two to render gay the scene; and presently, forgetting the foreigner and the seclusion for which he pays, squat sociably around and discuss private affairs with harsh voices that drone on for hours.

From Tientsin to Anping is fifty-two miles. Sometimes there are signs of a road with ruts a foot and a half deep ; sometimes there is but a rough raised path, skirting the wheat-fields. By sunset the miraculous ponies gave in altogether, and we had to dismount and drag them. What a prospect for the morrow ! for no others could be obtained for money. Anping,

the Tartar had declared cheerfully, was a 'number one topside place,' whereby he presumably intended to convey that, being a town rather than a village, the inn-yard would be large, and stocked with a more varied menagerie than usual. As we clattered under the gateway, our cart came round the corner. The martyr was in a state of prostration; his eyes were wildly rolling. With fiendish glee the Mafoo seized and shook him up like a bag of dirty clothes. Moaning, Sung tottered into my private chamber, fell on the floor in a heap, and refused to move or to be comforted. Heavens, what a night! The Tartar, ever cheery and handy, unpacked and prepared some food, unrolled the travelling mattress, which is a necessary item of luggage, and left us to sleep. Much chance of slumber! Sung, bent on avenging his plight, was taken ill, and gurgled; the animals snorted and quarrelled, and galloped about the yard; the grooms yelled; dogs bayed the moon and howled. At two a.m. a man rapped with a whip on the

door and demanded payment for administering some stimulant to the miraculous ponies. At four a.m. the Tartar, who knew no fatigue, strode in, seized his unhappy victim, flung him into the cart, explained that the driver was ready, and that the mattress must be packed. By this time anguish had gnawed so deep into the soul that what happened further mattered not. At six we were off again. Strange to relate, the bolus had done its work. The miraculous ponies were true to their reputation, and quite frisky. I had had no bolus, and wondered more than before why I had ever come.

The air and the motion, however, were very invigorating, and the scene began to display new elements of interest. There is a free wildness about this sort of expedition which is not without its charm. We flew along, stumbling up and down banks and over broken ground, and at 8.30 reached Dshang-Dshia-Wan, the last stopping-place. The sun was veiled, and the atmosphere cooler, so we

resolved, after a brief pause for breakfast, to push on. Better to string the nerves to endurance now, and collapse at the journey's end. The end! Delicious prospect. Good food. Cool drink. Unlimited rest. Silence possibly. An absence of flies and vermin—elysium!

The capital must be near, for the desert was becoming peopled. There were men riding on donkeys, bands of pedestrians, beggars. Males were wearing a new-shaped hat, six-sided and pointed, such as we see on old Dresden china figures that represent Chinese. The hair of the women was dressed in a new fashion, twined over a sort of silver paper-knife, and decked with bunches of flowers. The way was more rugged than ever. Deep dry ruts were varied by occasional quagmires, through which the springless carts, which are the only vehicles, rumbled and splashed. Oddly, there were no chairs to be seen, or palanquins—such being reserved, as I discovered later, for the use of officials or grandees. Everyone rides in these

parts, or is racked and tortured in low covered carriages with heavy cogged wheels and no pretence of springs.

A multitude of beggars kneeled in rows, knocking their heads in the dust, indulging in shrill jeremiads. There were many booths for the sale of primitive refreshments; and these served as a clue to show us the track that we must follow. Marble tablets reared on the backs of monster tortoises peeped weirdly out of the corn. We must be near Peking, and yet no sign of it across the weary plain. A singular capital, without a road to it. The sun suddenly shone forth with scorching heat. A few detached houses, with sleepers lying in the shadows. Peking at last—miles away, glimmering through a haze—a long line of fresh green trees with pagodas rising out of them; behind, a range of mountains. Yes, that was Peking, the Mafoo said; those mountains were his home—the hills of Tartary.

An interminable double line of straggling huts, with a deep ditch or sewer between.

Clumps of trees; temples; farmsteads; more trees, and yet no Peking. The arid plain seemed endless; as we advanced, the capital receded. Courage! The soil grew darker in colour; a thick veil of black—a swart simoom—enveloped everything like crape; and through it loomed at last a long line of wall, with a towering square fortress, crowned with a high-pitched roof of yellow tiles.

The outer gate of Peking, but a long distance yet to cover ere we reach our destination. The northern capital consists of three cities in concentric rings, the centre one the Imperial abode. Within the Chinese, or outer gate, you have four miles more to ride ere reaching the Tartar town—four miles of uneven waste, like coal-grimed common, with rudimentary streets and straggling groups of houses, and open areas, whereon perch booths and shows and hutches for eating and cheap merchandise.

Along this road space is of little moment. Booths for sale of medicines, iced drink, like weak sarsaparilla, tasteless apples, fragments of

tawdry finery, are dropped down anywhere. Booths of itinerant dentists adorned with festoons of teeth and fell steel implements, movable theatres, edifices of matting, stand right across the roads. Roads? There is no such thing in all Peking as a rational road, any more than on the way to it. Wide thoroughfares there are, a foot or more in dust, of so gritty and so fine a black as to creep beneath a watch-glass; or it would be better, perhaps, to say that the rough tracks run in trinities; for, unlike those of all other Chinese towns, the thoroughfares are of extreme width, consisting of three parallel elevations, the central one the highest.

But you may not select at will one of the three and follow it, for after progressing a few yards you will find whichever you happen to be on blocked either by a yawning chasm or huge stone, which will necessitate your climbing, as the case may be, up or down an embankment. Owing to this peculiarity and the cloud of grime raised by the scuffle, all vehicles are

provided with gauze blinds as a protection against the dust. Idle precaution! whether in a cart or on horseback—it is not possible to go afoot — you look, after a few moments, like a worker in a coal-mine; and it matters not, for are not all wayfarers the same?

The houses strike you as intolerably mean, so low and decayed are they and ruinous. But, then, all China is more or less in ruins. Architecturally there is nought to strike the eye, for buildings are of a height, masked in many cases by trees, sprouting out of yards. In the Tartar, or second city, no upper stories are allowed, by decree of the goddess of propriety; for in summer the place is like a furnace, and ladies are wont to sit in courts working at embroidery, and they must on no account be overlooked, for their clothing is of the scantiest. Would that the goddess were more particular in other matters! The capital teems with disgraceful sights as unfit for polite pen to note as for polite eyes to see. In many things Chinamen are curiously unrefined. Well, well! One can-

not beg them to wash their linen at home, for here they sport none; and if they did, it probably never would be washed.

When a man of middle class puts on his seven or eight winter wadded coats, the lower strata remain upon his person until the return of summer renders it necessary that one by one they should be peeled.

Clattering across the outer city, one is struck by the distinct change in the aspect of the people from those with whom one is already familiar. The men are exceedingly tall, well made, and comely, with faces that are scarcely yellow. The women are white and ruddy. There is a frank, open smile on both, unlike the self-sufficient, aggressive simper of the south. The approach to the Tartar Gate is encumbered with many vehicles, over or under which coolies who are on foot climb as best they may. There being no police for regulation of traffic, the carriages get inextricably blocked, and remain thus sometimes for hours axle-deep, their inmates a prey to a swarm of beggars,

who expose to view every form of malformation and disease, not excluding leprosy. Sometimes the strings of carts are wedged together for an entire day, their drivers rending the air with shrill anathemas; then, if you are in a hurry, you must e'en get out, up to your knees in dust, leaving your carriage to its fate.

Through, into the Tartar town, hustling Manchu women in the throng, who are composedly riding straddle-legged, hustled in turn by tottering bearers of great blocks of ice coated thick with dirt; by countrymen carrying baskets on their heads piled high with cucumbers and melons, pears and apricots. Behold! on the paved bank of a canal, a long low red building, with ponderous roof, flanked by Venetian masts, on the summit of one of which is flapping the Union Jack. Oh, blessed flag that marks the destined haven! This is the British Legation, once the palace of Prince Ho. A warm welcome. Whisky and soda iced! A bath, and then, sore and bruised, to bed, to sleep the dreamless sleep of exhausted

nature. By-and-by, in staggers the mangled relic of what once was the perky Sung. Cart and luggage have arrived, the latter more damaged by the brief trip across the plain than in all previous wanderings. The busy Mafoo crows with joy as he deftly unpacks the things, for the panting, haggard Sung is roused to speech as he sprawls and groans upon my sofa. 'No!' he declares with conviction, in a voice that is rendered raucous by fatigue and thirst; 'no! me get back safe to Canton; me come no more to Peking!'

The foreigners established here are few in number, consisting chiefly of the Diplomatic Corps (there are a few missionaries), and their fate is to be deeply commiserated. Though as a spectacle the street life of the northern capital is unique, its peculiarities soon pall upon the eye, and discomforts are manifold. For ladies existence must be a purgatory. They go out little beyond the limits of their own compounds; for it is displeasing to be covered with dirt—mud or dust, according to the

season — to appear with grimy visage and toilet ruined. The jolting of the tilt-carts is not to be assuaged, nor is it possible to assume within them any recumbent attitude which will save the limbs from bruises. Sights there are few, for, one by one, they are being closed to foreigners. A glimpse only of the Llama temple and the Temple of Heaven can now be seen from the summit of the distant wall. The marble bridge, from which the only view of the Forbidden City may be obtained, was barred to devils a year ago. The members of legations dine one with another, but in so limited a coterie subjects of mutual interest are soon exhausted. Curio-hunting is a resource, but for this amusement a large purse is *de rigueur*. In the late summer and autumn the state of affairs improves, for then the foreign contingent retires to the mountains, bivouacs in the spare rooms of temples; and makes up riding parties and excursions. Woe be to him or her who cannot ride! Life becomes that of a cripple. To the newly-

arrived stranger the turmoil and movement of the streets of the Tartar town are uncanny, seen through the veil of crape. Being the centre of government, mandarins of all grades are numerous, each swinging in a gorgeous palanquin of state, with a long retinue on horseback armed with spears and banners, as well as the usual rabblement on foot. And then the native ladies of high rank in their mule litters, covered all by a dense sheet of dust. These are large silk-bedizened boxes, with an animal in shafts in front and behind, adorned with trappings of broidered silk and peculiar tags and tassels. From under the gauze curtain that masks the opening there is usually a foot peeping in a dainty satin shoe, with a patten of glittering metal. Then the horsemen, who ride unattended—merchants, opulent shopkeepers—how various a cohort! A five-sided hat of straw, a long robe of softest silk spread over the horse's quarters—dark blue or heliotrope—with an armless over-jacket of plum or citron green, and full trousers enclosed

in loose gaiters of cream or rose colour—all soiled, alas, and blackened!

The coolie, admirably dressed in his own brawny muscles and oiled skin, and little else but an extinguisher.

The swarthy Mongol from the steppes, in an amazing drapery of greasy rags and mothy fur, who drives with a pointed stick his shaggy camel (its fur hanging down in strips), laden with sacks of coal.

At corners lads are grouped, staking their little all, with violent gesticulation, on mains of fighting crickets. The peripatetic blind beat deep-sounding gongs; vendors of trifles bang little drums or twang the Jew's-harp. Men squat anywhere on red tripods, having their crowns shaved and long hair plaited, while sympathizing cronies gather round, sipping tea and listening to professional story-tellers. A babble of inarticulate cries—an infinite gabble and long-winded chatter in high falsetto; a babel from hoarse throats.

The Tartar town is bisected from end to end

by a long straight wide trinity of parallel ways, on either side of which are shops and eating-houses, the latter conspicuous for much barbaric ornament and latticed balconies, from which peep sparkling eyes. Golden-fronted temples of Luxury these, cobwebs of snares for the unwary. Here the *jeunesse dorée* of Peking disports itself—drinks too much Hotsew—wastes its substance in gambling. Around the entrances a dense crowd of fan-sellers, singers, mules, barrows, sycophants, and *pique-assiettes* gaze longingly up at the gilded halls of pleasure, gathering about them their faded finery, in hopes of a summons to enter—Oriental Don Cæsars de Bazan. On neighbouring roof-tops and wide verandas are grouped a lower class, bent in more modest fashion upon a like result—eating and gaming—a drove of coolies in cotton trousers, their bodies bared to the waist.

In some places the way is supposed to be paved with huge blocks of granite, but as one or two are missing here and there, chasms

yawn, which suggest the absence of a front tooth from some giant saw; and from one to another you must spring like the agile chamois, or fall and bark your shin. To add insult to injury, you are beset during the process by half-nude creatures—some clad only in dirt of many years, with bird's-nests of tangled hair in lieu of pigtails—who cling with foul nails to your garments, as flying foxes hang on branches, demanding *cum-sha!* For are they not road-menders, and worthy of reward? Road-menders, forsooth! They refuse to be beaten off, except with rods; and, the difficult task accomplished, they gnash teeth, shake grimy fists threateningly, and break into torrents of reviling.

Slowly riding along one day to take in details, my host and I came upon a scene which could occur in no other land. Two men were quarrelling, with bloodshot eyes, face close to face; protruded lips were hissing forth scathing words. One, goaded to uncontrollable madness, leaped on a parapet, and, deliberately

flinging himself over into a dry watercourse, was picked up crushed and lifeless. Thus was he revenged for ever on his adversary; for, since he had died because of him, his ghost would haunt the living in this world, and pursue him dead into the next. Thus is it possible, by a trifling sacrifice, to make one's self exceedingly unpleasant. By a voluntary demise one may become a modern fury, to pursue relentlessly for ages an unlucky Celestial Orestes!

Trotting onward, we arrived at the moat of the Forbidden City, where a tribe of labourers were running about like ants. What could they be doing? On one side was the line of lofty battlements, with its massive corner turrets roofed with yellow tiles — the blank wall which conceals the fairy palace that no European's eyes have ever looked upon. On the other was the ornamental garden on a hill, crowned with the kiosk, wherein, defeated by the Tartars, the last Ming Emperor hanged himself. Around the base of this was the

usual triple road, winding away towards a city gate. For awhile we watched the labourers. They were busy on the central thoroughfare, coating it with cement, patting it flat and smooth. Could a revolution have suddenly been effected in Chinese ideas? Were they about to repair their city before it crumbled into ruin? No. The Emperor was about to make a pilgrimage to the tombs of his ancestors. He is too sacred to be seen by profane persons. The entire distance between the palace and the tombs (several miles) was to be enclosed in walls of matting. The way was to be as level as a billiard-table. Thus is it that the lord of all these millions holds communication with his people, learning their method of life, studying their wants and wishes. On the morning when the procession took place, two Englishmen happened to find themselves in a secluded corner hard by the tombs, where there was a rent in the matting, and, after the manner of Peeping Tom, they actually beheld the Emperor. He is a tall,

slim youth, they said, pale and delicate-looking, with refined features of a somewhat ascetic turn. He was clad in a plain robe of yellow silk, and was walking listlessly between his father and his uncle. His young face wore an expression of such settled sadness, said my informant, as would haunt him for many a day.

CHAPTER X.

THE GREAT WALL.

If it were not for duties, the world would be bearable enough ; but what one 'ought to do' is always cropping up, and even in travel it is invariably disagreeable. I had barely recovered from the effects of that awful ride, and was revelling luxuriously in the fleshpots of the British Legation, when my host remarked sternly one morning at breakfast, 'You must go to the Great Wall !' I feebly replied that I did not perceive the necessity ; that I was extremely comfortable at his board ; that I considered his statement vexatious and inhospitable. But he was obdurate. 'You've got to go to the Great Wall, and you've got to go to the Ming Tombs, so make up your

mind to it, and the sooner you start, you know, the sooner you'll be back. If I allowed you to go south without having "done these lions," you would curse me for ever after.'

Another awful ride, then—one that would spread over a week! Well, what must be, must; so with casual fits of wrath at the too vivid sense of duty of my adamantine host I set about my preparations, wishing that I had never been born. The Mafoo was enchanted, and revived. He was pining in the artificial atmosphere of the luxurious Legation, as a deer-hound pines in a drawing-room. Moreover, the hated Sung was too rapidly recovering; was even daring to set up his back and spit at the Tartar like a spiteful cat. His lesson was not yet learned. It was time that his martyrdom should recommence. But Sung's recent sufferings had recoiled upon myself, as I had discovered to my cost, so I resolved on this occasion to shake off the incubus, to leave him behind—a plan to which he gladly agreed.

We were to rough it, said the Tartar—as if we had not roughed it on the terrible gallop from Tientsin! A cart with provisions, etc., was to be sent straight to Nankow, where we should arrive some time or other. We were to carry saddle-bags containing some food and a change of raiment, and leave the rest to chance. The stalwart Tartar would strap my travelling camera upon his back, for we probably should visit spots to which photography had never been applied. The few miles through black grit ere we were quit of the town were dreadful. At Pittsburg, in the United States, you cannot put your head out of window without being compelled to change your shirt. The Tartar (who never washed) could not understand the feeling of *malaise* which a dirty face engenders. His toilet consisted of shaking out his pigtail, and rubbing his nose with the corner of his linen blouse. To avoid the great heat we started each morning at four, taking refuge somewhere between the hours of twelve and three; for

experience showed that the miraculous ponies suffered more than we did, turning sick and dizzy under the mid-day sun ; and as now they had a long journey before them, it behoved us to consider their comfort. They certainly were miraculous ponies, for when apparently at the last gasp, a few hours' rest would bring them round, and from animals at the point of death they would suddenly become charmingly well.

At the early hour of four the outskirts of the Chinese town were more busy than later in the day. The long straight thoroughfare leading to the frowning square mass of the huge city gate was alive with ambling peasants, laden with produce from without—chickens, cucumbers, frogs, onions, apricots ; the latter, lovely to look upon (piled up in immense swinging baskets), but tasting like cotton wool. Itinerant vendors of refreshment by the wayside often offer fruit to the hot and thirsty rider, but it is always more wise to choose a cup of a liquor that looks like coffee, but is something akin to sarsaparilla.

Out of the last gate, into the open. Really it was better to be careering through the clear fresh air than stifling in the dust of the city. Northward towards the Tartar mountains, whose scarce perceptible silhouette had formed so charming a background to the first picture of Peking. A fig for Capua! What are armchairs and deft cooks and iced champagne but vanities? A rough pony between one's knees that was not likely to fall down for several hours at least. In a satchel some potted meats and biscuits. Tea could be obtained anywhere. New wonders in ambush among those frowning hills. Overhead a cloudless sky. No idea whatever as to how far we should get, or where we should take our rest. Perfect health and highest spirits. Life was worth living, after all!

At the fitting hour for repose we found ourselves close to a temple, whose chief treasure was a bell. Not a common bell. A mass of bronze fifteen feet high, elaborately worked with bas-reliefs of Buddha's disciples, and long

inscriptions. I was told to admire it, but did not. On the other hand, the priests in their yellow gabardines evidently admired me. My riding-gloves, old and shabby, excited their ecstatic admiration.

By-and-by we reached Yuen-Ming-Yuen—all that remains of the celebrated summer palace that was so cruelly sacked by the French. In the lurid glow of the brief sunset that sight was a mournful one—a sad and impressive sermon on the instability of human magnificence. It stands now exactly as it was left by the victors, and those who know declare that the destruction of this favourite imperial resort was a sound act of policy rather than a brutal piece of vandalism. The layer of conceit that overlays the Chinese intellect is so thick, the conviction of superiority so overweening, that no lesson but an extreme and violent one could penetrate through the crust—an epidermis as horny as the hide of the rhinoceros. Nothing short of the ruthless overthrow and annihilation of an object which

was the pride of all could teach John Chinaman that the foreign devil was not a serf, an abject tributary to his own Emperor, but an equal, whose wrath was to be feared. Of all the treasures stored here, there was nothing which was not either destroyed or taken away except a pair of fine bronze lions. These are still erect upon their pedestals, gazing, with their backs to the ruins, towards the capital; and so cunningly wrought are they, that it is a wonder they have never been removed. The view is striking. A large square piece of shallow water, thick with wind-beaten reeds; at one extremity a bridge with many arches of pure white marble. To the left a small island, admirably wooded, and on a neighbouring piece of rising ground a porcelain pagoda of fifteen stories. Behind, the grand silhouette of the western range; in the middle distance a long low hill covered with what once were kiosks and summer-houses; heaps of tumbled bricks, and tiles of blue and yellow, dragon-embossed; flights of marble

steps upon the hillside leading to basins, used once as imperial baths.

Journeying towards Nankow we left the beaten track and struck across country with the intention of skirting the mountains. A lovelier picture than met the eye in the crisp dawn one would not wish to admire. The hills were marvellous in colour, pale blue flecked with shadows of deepest ultramarine, and they formed—melting from azure into yellow—a delicious harmony of contrast with the ripening harvest on the plains. Looking across the flat, the expanse of ruddy gold was variegated here and there with clumps of trees and tiny woodlets, and homely farmsteads, while from out the corn peered numberless scattered tombs and tablets, for Chinamen are buried anywhere, according to the whim of the geomancer. Now and again a stooping figure rose, and, shading face with hand, nodded a bright good-morrow. How different these from the odious natives of the south! Arriving about mid-day at a village, an

ancient man with a drooping white moustache emerged and bade us a hearty welcome. Nothing would please him but that we should enjoy his rustic hospitality. He was the headman—responsible for the good behaviour of all the villagers—head-bailiff also to a mandarin, who owned the surrounding property. His cottage was small and low, and of course dirty, but nothing could be more kind than he. There was about him and his the simple highbred courtesy which belongs as much to 'nature's nobleman' as to the caste of Vere de Vere. He led me by the hand into his den, stuffy and close, with a strong smell of onions; pushed me on to the 'daïs of honour,' produced tea, and saw that the cups, if unclean, were never empty. By-and-by, it being dinner-time, his flock came in from the fields, and hearing at once of the apparition of a *rara avis*, crowded in to look. The ancient was treated with extreme respect. His brief orders, issued in low tones, were instantly obeyed. Not, of course, by children,

for here they were as unruly as elsewhere. A host of them were driven out with a 'shoo!' and sent unceremoniously packing, whereupon they clustered round the windows, darkened the already tempered light, and poking holes with fingers through the paper, applied their eyes to the apertures. Opening a box which contained his treasures, the ancient produced his best fan for my behoof; and then with evident pride he ceremoniously presented three generations of descendants. Fine creatures all, sturdy and healthy, and big-boned, with straight backs and brawny shoulders, and the awkward sheepish gentleness which is one of the attributes of the strong and unsophisticated. As each was pushed forward, the Mafoo translated a description of him into pigeon-jargon—a kind of *catalogue raisonnée* of the family—the details of which being always complimentary, the specimen under observation invariably blushed as he went through his curious obeisance. One might indite a history of obeisances, they vary so. This one was

very peculiar. Pressing two fists together the patient raised them slowly to his face, sticking out his elbows the while, then slowly lowered them to his knees, repeating the process three times, then returning to a pose of attention. Of course all my few European chattels had to be handed round—my watch, hanging knife, sketch-book, travelling map of paths. But here, as elsewhere, the object which produced crows of most extreme wonder was a glove. A new one perhaps would not have struck them much. An old dogskin one, if flung down, retains exactly the shape of the hand. One by one they cautiously picked it up, as though it might go off or bite, slowly peered within, and, finding nothing, chirped with childish glee.

Unaccustomed to natural courtesy from natives, I sat on and on, much interested, till the inexorable Mafoo, pointing at the sun, remarked that we had far to travel. We must reach Nankow by dusk, for in the dark we should speedily be lost. To horse, there-

fore—on and on for miles—till, leaving the plain, we struck upwards, the path growing every hour more steep and difficult.

As might be expected, Nankow is a strange place. That antique stronghold of robber kings is a little walled town, crowned at short intervals by hoary towers, standing at the narrow entrance to a gorge exceedingly wild and desolate. Its one precipitous street, adorned with trees, is a dry torrent-bed, beset by immense stone blocks, round which you have to steer. Its houses are up or down, according to their position on or beside a mass of rock. There is one inn, with the usual gruesome courtyard and skittish menagerie of mules and ponies, enriched on this occasion by a full chorus of howling dogs.

In this odd land one grows tired of being astonished, but here a little surprise may surely be permissible. The town is the key to the Nankow Pass—a narrow defile—which is the highway between China and Siberia. Along a dry river-bed, which in the rainy season

forms a cataract, with many a toilsome turn 'twixt beetling cliffs, caravans are perpetually passing, toiling painfully; trains of Mongolian camels, with a sweet chime of bells about their necks to accentuate the silence, amiably stalking with craned heads and spongy feet, loaded with silk or tea. The traffic is constant and enormous; yet there is no road, and the way is impassable for horses. There once was a road, a wide cyclopean structure of huge cut blocks, a labour as amazing as the Pyramids; but ages of winter storm and boiling torrent have done the work of Titans. The stones have become dislodged. Some have toppled over a precipice, others have got piled in heaps, with yawning chasms between. In some places rocks have descended from above, leaving narrow fissures through which a camel may be squeezed. The pilgrimage, therefore, from Nankow to the Pantaling Gate in the Great Wall must be accomplished on mules or donkeys (since camels it is not possible to hire), and their feet must be constantly watched. A

weird and fascinating pilgrimage, like a bit of the 'Inferno'—a foretaste of Chaos. Something original and quaint and unexpected at every turn. A camel-kraal, with gobble-gobbling beasts, smiling and content, viewing the world through rosy spectacles, peering serenely over a low wall, their fur in shreds, like the fragments of a mothy hearthrug. A distant tinkle-tinkle growing louder, till round a corner swings a winding cavalcade. Each animal wears a yellow ticket on his pack like a luggage-label. It is his passport across the frontier. Walking by his side, or perched aloft, his driver—such a picturesque fellow in fur cap and skin pelisse, and wadded robe of darned and faded mustard-colour, and uncouth pistols dangling. His unkempt hair hangs in elf-locks over his gnarled and sunburnt face; his beard is ragged like his clothes; his rough boots of untanned skin are shapeless and uncouthly patched—an ideal cut-throat brigand; a sombre, black-eyed, savage-looking ruffian, whose appearance is a libel on his character.

For these Mongol caravan-drivers are simple, harmless souls, who can fight like devils if need be, but who, unless insulted, are as peaceful as the creatures they bestride. Our appearance invoked much curiosity. They hailed us as they passed, inquiring who we could be, and where we came from. Some had never seen a European, and were full of questions in a tongue which the Mafoo, though he hailed from these parts, found hard to understand. But these were genuine nomad Mongols, like a gipsy with a cross of the Bedouin. One asked me to dismount to see how tall I was, and with hoarse peals of laughter measured against mine his own greasy and malodorous back. One, a superior bandit, judging from the elaborate silver inlaying on his pistols, became exceeding friendly. How far were we going? Through to Siberia? Hardly; since our impedimenta were so light. Where was our retinue? What! only as far as the Great Wall? That must not be. We must, at least, proceed as far as Huai-Lai-Hsien, and see a

genuine bit of Tartary. There was an encampment of his fellows just outside who would make us at home with joy. Here was a temptation too strong to be resisted. Flesh-pots, away! Vanish, visions of Capua! Or, rather, let us consider how much more will be appreciated Legation comforts after agonizing experiences of Steppes! And so, the bargain clinched with chinchins, we jogged along together, the humble ass of Sancho beside the lofty Mongolian Rosinante.

This number-one-topside-bandit was vastly entertaining. I soon palled upon him, just as might the fat woman in a fair, for the depth of my strangeness was soon sounded. The stalwart Mafoo was more after his own heart, for he was as dirty as himself, could converse after a fashion by aid of much pantomime, and related yarns of thrilling interest of the *Family Herald* kind, of which I was obviously the hero; for now and again the bandit turned in admiring sympathy to nod at me (I, weighed down by laurels never fairly won,

had meekly retired to the rear), plunging a metal tooth-pick into the bale whereon he sat, and drawing thence something brown, which he proceeded musingly to gnaw. When the hole in the bale grew larger, he stuffed in two fingers, and gave me of his perquisites. Tobacco! Blessed bandit! Reckless, light-hearted, devil-may-care nomad; as jovial and good-natured and rollicking as any salt of Wapping. Nay, was he not almost a salt, since he bestrode the ship of the desert? Now and again he pointed with a stick at certain ruined towers on the hillside. Time was when this pass was a miniature battleground, a series of turret fastnesses whose lords dealt death at one another like the chiefs of the Afghan hillmen. Indeed, more than once I was tempted to wonder whether I was not again in the Khyber, *en route* from Peshawur for Ali Musjid, where village is at internecine strife with village, popping playfully during the night, making sallies and raids in the morning.

But here there are no martial hillmen, no

fierce scouts with knives slung across their backs three feet or more in length, ready to plunder the traveller or be civil, according to strength of escort. The wild Nankow Pass is perfectly safe. None move up or down its painful torrent-bed but traders. Occasionally —but this is rare—a magnate with mule-litters on shafts, and a motley following, staggers and steers among the boulders. How unusual is such a vision may be easily understood, considering the fascinations of the goal. Who should want to cross the Steppes into Siberia, except professional deliverers of parcels? It strikes one as curious, though, that a dangerous and solitary track, along which meanders an endless trail of precious merchandise, should not be beset by robbers. Nowhere could be detected a sign of guards, or customs, or a sentry on a point of vantage. If guards there were, they were well concealed. We seemed to have got beyond the bounds of mere mundane greed. In the Inferno—in the realms of chaos—how absurd a mockery, theft!

It was rather convenient, so far from shops, to have tobacco ladled out from a hole in a pack-saddle. But that is by the way.

Our patient donkeys, that with trembling little legs picked their steps so warily, were surefooted and untiring, if slow. Half-way down the pass there is a walled something, which is by courtesy called a town, and which rejoices in the simple title of Dshu-yung-hsia-guan—a large name for so wee a nest. Its hilly lane is more fit for feet of flies than tramp of soldiery. Access is gained by two gateways—sculptured with very ancient and curious bas reliefs of Buddhas—so low that one on camel-back must stoop, with a space between the gates supplied with engines for heaving missiles upon intruders. So small is the place that there seem more stones in the encircling wall than in the houses it protects. You are hardly up one steep incline before you have slid down the other, through another pair of twin gates, into the open, carrying with you a sense of want of air, aggressive grim-

ness, and grisly weapons of offence. The tameness of the pigeons hereabouts is surprising. Numberless gray and russet birds perch on the way, declining to move till they are literally kicked aside.

Proceeding onward, the path grows worse, wandering sometimes half-way up the cliff-side, sometimes between piles upraised as by an earthquake—huge masses heaped as a child may build pebbles idly—displaced like straws by the rush of inundations long ago. We came upon a solitary blind man feeling his way with a long staff, a strange rapt smile about his lips, among the yawning gaps. How had he got so far without being dashed to pieces? Would he ever reach his destination? Whither was he going? A mile further on, perched high on a perpendicular face of rock, there was a tiny temple—a gilt joss glittering within—approached by shallow steps roughly chiselled in the cliff. Was this the object of his pilgrimage? The idol must possess some very sacred attributes for devotees to toil so

far. A bevy of pious, small-footed women had succeeded in crawling up the steps, and, their orisons completed, were looking down helplessly, unable to descend. Our party had to stop and lift them down one by one like articles of furniture, whereupon they chin-chinned their thanks, mounted their donkeys, which were browsing below, and ambled away among the boulders. The gorge opened out; the torrent-bed grew wider. What was that? A line in angles, like a pale thread on the mountain-side. The Great Wall of China!

By-and-by we reached the Pantaling Gate —a double gateway with no doors, half-choked with heaps of rubbish. The principal gate, this, of the Great Wall of China; beyond, the Mongolian desert. I scrambled over the rubbish and loose bricks to the top of the gate, with a numbing sense of disappointment. This the much-vaunted Wall! I remember, hazily, having been told in childhood that it was one of the wonders of the world; that it was constructed of marble-blocks; and was so thick

that ever so many chariots could race abreast along the top. He who invented such a story was a near relation of Ananias. It is not more than eight feet wide at the summit, with an absurd parapet on either side which looks as if a jerry-builder had erected it. Modern cannon would blow the whole concern into space in no time. It is in shockingly bad repair too. Its bricks of brownish red are large but thin, like those of ancient Egypt. Leaning on the parapet, the feeling of disillusion waned. The Great Wall is a wonder, after all, as a monument of human patience. Nature at this point is at her sternest. The immensity of the chain of bare iron uncompromising crags, tier behind tier, grows by degrees upon the mind, chilling the heart with a humble conviction of insignificance. This barrier, fashioned by human hands with indefatigable patience, winds steadily, regardless of obstacles, along thousands and thousands of miles of silence, with square watch-towers at distances; along tops, across bluffs, up perpen-

dicular cliffs, down chasms. Nothing checked the indomitable perseverance of these builders; no peril stayed, no danger daunted them.

Yes, it is a wonderful piece of work, and one surveyed its serpentine line impalpably fading into distance with awe born of respect.

Moving to the outer parapet we gazed over. A defile widening out into an amphitheatre—a flat level, looking strangely like the sea; further away the inhospitable Steppes of Tartary.

Passing under the double gateway and out on the other side, the chirping Mafoo grew silent; his brow was wrinkled by care. There was something on his mind; what was it? Master's passport, which the faithful one wore over his heart, was good as far as this Pantaling Gate; no farther. If Master carried out his intention of proceeding as far as Huai-Lai-Hsien, he might get into trouble, and Master would not like to be locked up in that remote town, which was very uncomfortable and dirty. If the Mafoo thought it dirty, then must it be

foul indeed! The number-one-bandit, being consulted, agreed that it would not do to run the risk, considering that I was not provided with a luggage-label passport like the camels. But why enter the town at all? His fellows who were to give us such a welcome were encamped some miles this side of it. Happy thought. We would proceed as far as the encampment and indulge in a new experience.

Well, it was one of those experiences whose chiefest charm is brevity. Among the stones and scrubby undergrowth of a pebble-strewn plain some dozen tents were pitched, round flat-topped tents of felt stretched on frameworks of bamboo. As they were intended for winter as well as summer use in one of the least clement climates in the world, snugness was an essential, hence there was no opening, save that by which you entered, and that was masked by a curtain. About six bandits slept in each small tent, and they apparently never undressed from year's end to year's end, and ventilation there was none. I woke in

the night from a nightmare of suffocation to a knowledge of curious savours. A pungent odour of bad fish ; an insidious sour smell as of rotten apples—and oh! what cohorts of vermin! The shingly floor and woolly walls were crawling. I felt my way in the intense darkness, stumbling over sprawling limbs of prostrate braves, and panted forth into the air. There was a fresh wind blowing, thank goodness. The glorious silhouette of hills looked magnificently blue in the moonlight. No sound but the ghostly gobbling of camels in their enclosure, and the tinkling of bells when they moved. Out of the world indeed!

Nothing could be more polite than these rough gipsies. They offered of their best—a greasy soup made of a dry sort of pemmican—and when we took our departure walked back with us a mile or two in the direction of the gate. An elderly man in a long pelisse of sheepskin and cloth buskins, who appeared to be the chief, took my hand and touched his forehead with it—yet another form of obeisance.

Of course all my chattels had been passed in review and commented on. I bade the Mafoo ask him what he would like as a memento of our visit, sorely dreading that he would hanker after my only clasp-knife. No; he would dearly like my gloves, and they should be handed down to posterity as an heirloom, a mystic fetish. He took them and pressed them to his brow, and when some time later I looked back, he was still standing there with the gloves clasped against his heart.

From Nankow it is a brisk ride of twenty miles or so due east to a larger, if not more important, walled city, Tshang-Ping-Dshou. Its walls are cracked in fissures, and large bits have crumbled, giving an appearance as of a slice of brown cake with pieces bitten out of it. The watchtower over the gateway is a mere wooden skeleton; its battlements have fallen, and there is a dreary air about the place as of a plague-stricken and deserted city. Within there is a single busy street with one habitable

inn in the centre; all the remainder are in ruins. The natives were affable, smiling and nodding; some of them coming up to bawl something in my ear as if they thought a foreigner must be deaf, and shrugging shoulders pityingly at a poor creature who could not understand. An elder, as appears to be the practice, took the stranger in tow, and, through the Mafoo, asked many questions about Europe. Was there, in my distant home—how many days' journey was it?—any town more fascinating than this one? He was anxious to know whether it was true that foreigners used a *quick-cart?* He had been told so by a travelled brother, but really people who travel have so little regard for truth! A quick-cart? Of course, a railway! Yes; at home we used quick-carts, and they went as quick as forty miles an hour. The elder gazed upon me sadly. It was clear that I was more mendacious even than his brother. Oh—those travellers! He led us into a square which was full of people, for there was a theatrical

entertainment going on, and the audience had ranged their tilt-carts in neat rows, and squatted inside, a whimsical parterre of private boxes. The play was in dumb-show; there was no applause. Princes and princesses in gorgeous clothes rushed in and out of doors; processions marched round and round amid a deafening din of gongs and drums. The audience seemed to enjoy the show, for, though silent, they were all on the broad grin, while vendors of toys, and artificial flowers and iced drinks threaded among the carts, doing a roaring trade.

The inn was an important one, with a very large courtyard, inch deep in sticky mire, curiously mottled with dust. Instead of being conducted as usual to the centre room of honour, I found myself relegated to a species of rabbit-hutch at the extreme end of the row of chambers. The Mafoo's dignity was wounded. He stormed and raved in vain. An extremey number-one-topside-dignitary was expected, before whom my mere foreign magnificence

must efface itself—no other than the Governor of Mongolia himself with his family and retinue on the way to his distant post. Here was a chance of a close view of Tartars of high rank! Two *avant-couriers* clattered in, and were much exercised on beholding a foreigner. The landlord was summoned. How dared he on so solemn an occasion admit a foreign devil? The intruder must be expelled forthwith.

There was no other hostelry in the town, and, moreover, my mind was quite made up as to a private view of high-class Tartars on their travels. I bade the Mafoo retire into obscurity, while I, *en evidence*, would bear the brunt of the dispute. It is useful sometimes to be preternaturally ignorant and stupid. I sat in the doorway of my hutch, and the more the couriers stormed, the more sweetly smiled the foreign devil, who evidently looked upon their talk as highflown Oriental compliment. After a time they grew tired and disgusted at such crass idiocy, and gave it up. So far, well.

How busy a scene as the sun slowly sank. The chambers of the elect were disposed as usual, exactly facing the gateway. Along each side there was a row of open stalls for animals, which were speedily appropriated and filled by a stream of new arrivals. Pedlars and bagmen, each with packs, neatly sewn in matting, on mules or donkeys. They bivouacked about the yard, spreading thick rugs, and producing utensils for cooking. Some of the animals were merely unharnessed and let loose, whereon they scampered hither and thither, or rolled on their backs in the mud, throwing up the layer of dust. The skins of some of them, I observed, were chafed with dreadful sores.

Just before sunset there was a tremendous clatter without. More outriders rode in, with yellow hats adorned with fringes of red silk, and silver watches ostentatiously displayed. These, casting loose their mules, opened the doors of the central chamber of honour, and prepared for the august arrival. A grand

rushing, and ordering, and screaming. A stampede in the street. A chime of bells. Eighteen mules with luggage. Four litters—species of idealized sedans—with a mule fore and aft in shafts. Really handsome conveyances these, commodious probably; blinds drawn close and yellow flags like miniature "burgees" flying. The litters stopped in the midst of the *vacarme* of spattering mud and kicking animals; and the great gates swung to to keep out the prying crowd. The front bearer was unharnessed, and the end of the first litter carefully deposited on the ground; the same with the animal in rear. Then a silken blind was drawn aside, and out of the window came a foot, and then a leg, and then a fat old gentleman, who shook himself and pushed his way through the mob, affably bowing to right and left. On the threshold of the central rooms a servant approached, and whispering, pointed at me. Now for the tug of diplomatic war. The Mafoo, awkward and shy and sheepish in so exalted a presence, advanced

meekly, and stated that his master, although suffering under the disadvantage of being a foreigner, was a very great number-one-topside-man in his own country, and surely the jewelled mandarin would not be so cruel as to turn him out into the road. Certainly not. The mandarin bowed and retired. The object was gained. Now for the other litters.

From number two was protruded a very stout leg in a loose silken trouser followed by an elderly and obese lady, who had much difficulty in getting through the window at all. Dragged and pulled by several men, she was at length deposited on her pattened shoon, gasping, but safe. Her cheeks and eyelids were painted a bright pink; her hair, adorned with a *chevaux de frise* of silver pins, was so stiffened with pomade as to glitter like burnished metal. Over her braided and broidered trousers she wore a long blue bedgown.

From number three there came a secretary; from number four—down, down, my heart! This number four was more ornate than the

others, borne by two handsome milkwhite mules. The old lady gesticulated so violently, as soon as she could draw breath, that there was evidently something within of special value. Without waiting for the animals to be unharnessed, a trim rose-coloured silk leg, with a dainty gilt patten on a coquettish shoe, pushed aside the curtain, and there skipped forth a tall and pretty girl in pink trousers and a loose short jacket, who proceeded to pull out her *amah* or Chinese nurse—a pursy, small-footed woman. A vastly comely maiden, lithe and straight, whose queer garments became her well, for they fully displayed without indecency the fine lines of a well-developed figure. She was unpainted. Her skin was of a pale olive, her jet black hair was decorated with pins and artificial flowers. So trim and neat was she, that one would never have guessed that she had travelled all day, encased in a wooden box. The ladies—bless them, their voices were discordant—busied themselves with the unpacking and transporting of the luggage,

the which, with much screaming, being accomplished to their satisfaction, they twined their arms together, and took a stroll among the mules and packs, the stable-boys and rolling donkeys. They eyed me, as I them, with much covert curiosity; but their manners were perfect. When I made a solemn obeisance, they slightly returned the bow with a stately distant dignity, which seemed to say without discourtesy, 'You are here on sufferance, foreign devil. Do not stare or be presuming.' It was curious to see these ladies of high lineage mixing familiarly with the carters and bagmen, pausing to ask them questions, then passing on with an inclination of the head. The young lady seemed much idolized; for, later on, the *amah* affectionately picked tit-bits out of the porcelain soup-pot, on the threshold of the chamber of honour, and gently placed them with her chopsticks between the rosebud lips.

Very odd and barbaric was all this. The details of private life were performed in public

before the eyes of servitors and pedlars, a *faux air* of privacy having been theoretically obtained by closing the outer doors of the courtyard. The ladies must have slept on the hard wooden pillows which catch the nape of the neck, leaving the head free, for next morning their pins and flowers were exactly at the same angles as yesterday.

The object of a sojourn at Tshang-Ping-Dshou is to visit thence the tombs of the Ming emperors. There is a corresponding set of tombs, I believe, somewhere in the direction of Nanking; but these of the far north are rendered particularly impressive by reason of their isolation and the grim landscape which serves as background. The Governor of Mongolia being an early bird, there was such a clatter at 3 a.m., such a loading of baggage-mules and packing of traps at the last moment, such a screeching over objects which were near being left behind, that less important patrons of the hostelry had to follow suit and bestir

themselves. It was the loveliest of mornings for a ride; at so early an hour the air was yet crisp and fresh. About four o'clock we reached a square triple gateway of sculptured marble. To the right could be faintly discerned the brown walls, like a huge ant-hill, of the town whence we had come.

In front lay a perfectly level plain of wide extent, surrounded on all sides but one by a horseshoe of pointed peaks, glorious with strong blue shadows. From the sculptured gate the eye could trace a broad road bisecting the plain, with massive stone bridges here and there over watercourses, and buildings quaintly tiled; and at the extreme end (seven miles away), rising from a grove of ancient firs and junipers, a brilliant roof of yellow. Dotted right and left, embosomed in verdure, were similar roofs of smaller dimensions. For a line of kings a fitting place of burial—neglected, marked by the finger of decay, as becomes the wrecked grandeur of a long-fallen dynasty. Presently we passed under

another gateway, or, rather, through an open temple, from out of the shadow of which a monster tortoise peered, which bore on its back a huge tablet, inscribed with the names of the departed.

Emerging from this, we entered an avenue of silent watchers, at whose unearthly aspect the miraculous ponies snorted and swerved aside. And well they might, for on either side the way was an army of gigantic men and animals—a long line of towering ghosts turned into stone—who kept guard over the dead, as motionless as they. This was the body-guard of the Ming Emperor Yung-Lo (who lay in the grove beyond), by some spell petrified, watching with a patience to which Time was nought till their lord should choose to wake.

Immense camels there were, two and two, rudely carved in pale gray marble; horses; griffins, facing one another with blank eyes; killeens—heraldic lions of terrific aspect; men erect in martial panoply, with scowling visages

downturned, and sabres raised to smite. Soldiers, generals, high officers of state—all were standing ready, each in his special gear.

The intense stillness of this wild, remote and solitary spot, with its enchanted court and sleeping monarchs, alone, among the savage hills, oppressed the nerves. In spite of one's nineteenth-century common-sense, one could not help picturing a waking. When the great king slumbering yonder should deign to rise, his marble following would surely quicken into life, prompt to do his bidding. The silence grew painful. One longed for a bird or humming insect to combat with busy presence this absorbing majesty of Death; or was it that we had passed through the open temple into a frozen world of suspended animation, chilled for some heinous sin?

Clattering along the paved causeway, we reached at last the central grove, within which was a group of yellow buildings, masked by a high, blank wall. The Mafoo

knocked at the entrance gate. A long pause, a patter of slipshod feet, a fumbling with ponderous locks. Then a shaven bonze in saffron drapery opened a wicket. Thank Heaven! Here was something living! He conducted us through a small garden, shaded by cedars and firs, and choked with rank weeds; across a series of open halls, with elaborate roofs and pillars adorned with painted dragons half effaced, and divers altars, to a large building erected against a cliff. In the centre an arch, half masked by creeping plants, through which might dimly be discerned a paved incline ending in an ungarnished slab. This was the sealed entrance to a passage, the priest explained, excavated far into the rock. There, in the heart of the eternal hills, on the verge of the sandy ocean, beyond which lies bleak Siberia, with a mountain for a gravestone, slumbers the Emperor Yung-Lo.

Rather than face a second time the awful pilgrimage across the plains to Tientsin—it was

hotter now than when I came to Peking—I resolved, when the time came for moving, to ride to Tung-Chow, and descend the weariful Peiho by boat. The twists of the river double the distance, but going with the stream one should reach Tientsin on the third morning. This is the route that is usually chosen by travellers to and from the capital, so it was as well to undergo the experience. Sung, quite recovered now, was started at dawn in the cart with the luggage, and instructed to have everything ready on board the boat, that we might weigh anchor at sunset. The boatmen had undertaken for a double *cumsha* to work all night as well as day.

The Tung-Chow track is grievously beset by beggars, even more impudent and importunate than those of Naples. They kneel at distances, knocking their foreheads on the ground and uttering sharp wails, which produce but little effect, for wayfarers trot by unheeding. Native interior economy seems to need much support. Tea-booths are numberless, the stock-in-trade consisting of a ragged

mat-awning, two benches, some cracked tea-cups, a bowlful of chopsticks, and a big battered kettle. In some more luxurious establishments, hard-boiled eggs are displayed in piles, and saucers of chopped vegetables.

The river-quay of Tung-Chow presents a curiously busy scene with its myriad of boats packed close together three and four deep. Such a cackling, and shouting, and unlading! How was my own particular craft to be found in all this medley? Sung, had he any sense, would be seen presently waving his arms from some conspicuous point. But no. His moment for revenge was come. Vainly we rode up and down the bank. No Sung, and no luggage. It was plain that he had gone off without me! The brave Mafoo, whose intellect was not attuned to dealing with emergencies, broke down and wept. What else could be expected of a Canton rascal, but that he should leave his master in the lurch? If ever he, the Mafoo, caught him, he would wring his neck and break his bones! Master must ride across

the plain. The sun was going down, and ere it was pitch-dark we must reach Matou. What? The awful ride again without mattress or provisions? Never! The gentle Tartar having lost his head, it behoved me to take matters into my own hands. Surely since the river wound in so many turns, it would be easy to overtake the boat. But then we knew it not by sight, and the crafty Sung, fully to avenge his wrongs, would probably conceal himself. After sunset it would be impossible to follow, and on the morrow he would be out of reach, glorying in our discomfiture. We must gallop along the river-bank, and put our trust in Providence.

All along the way were picturesque encampments, the water population having drawn up their craft for the night, and bivouacked on shore. Men were dressing their long hair, women cooking, naked brats playing on the mudbanks with mangy dogs and poultry. Answers to our questions were delightfully contradictory. Some had seen a dozen boats

go by, others none at all. What if ours was actually awaiting us somewhere in the Tung-Chow medley which we had left behind us? On we went, and on, the Mafoo exhaling his despair in sighs. A wild-goose chase! The sun went down. Matou was five miles off inland. I was just about reluctantly to give up the quest, when the Tartar pointed to a sail rising above the corn, a turn or two lower down. A last chance worth trying. Clatter and slip and slide on the rough bank. A shout, a summons to heave-to. A head appeared above the cabin roof, the head of Sung the traitor, beautifully innocent! Then was the wrath of the giant kindled. He shook his fist; he foamed at the mouth; his eyes goggled and flashed fire. He would kill him, he would, then and there. The caitiff of Canton should never revisit that despicable hole. The boatmen looked on and laughed, while the pale tight-skinned visage of the erring myrmidon wore an expression of childlike wonder. Why all this waste of breath? Was he not faith-

fully conveying master's precious luggage to Tientsin? In coming, master had sent him in a cart, now in a boat; he, the faithful one, was blameless. There was no use in arguing with the too cunning knave. When it came to the paying of wages there should be no *cumsha*. There I should score. The Mafoo was bidden to curb his ire and hold his peace, and take back the horses overland. On the third day he was to be in waiting with them at the bridge of boats, that I might make an excursion to the country-house of a friend, while Sung took the luggage to the steamer which would shortly be starting for Shanghai.

This journey down the river was so unpleasant that the ponies were soon regretted. The space amidships was occupied by one low cabin, covered in with a half-circle of matting, almost the whole of which space was occupied by a bed-place on which my mattress was spread. Forward there were a few feet of boards, where the six boatmen worked or slept, no door or curtain to separate them

from their passenger. Astern was the cooking crucible, in which some nauseous mess was steaming constantly, loading the air with odours of fish and garlic. Such breeze as entered the hot cabin passed over the nude sailors, whose bodies were ineffably unclean, and who were continually puffing opium. Even the torrid ride was preferable to this public imprisonment, for on the plain one was free from contamination, and could claim even in the noisy innyard the seclusion of a private den. The sailors proved unpleasingly familiar. One deliberately took a cigar from between my lips as I lay reading, and proceeded to smoke it himself. Objecting to be stared at, I slung a plaid across the opening, which was quickly taken down. Being at the mercy of these men, the only prudent course was to keep one's temper, and shorten the journey as much as might be. Sung was ordered, accordingly, to offer them double fare if they would labour in relays, and go on to the end without a stop. Sleep was out of the question, by

reason of the unceasing chant, without which Chinese sailors cannot work—a sharp, single, sustained tremolo, with a chorus every two minutes, in which other voices join. The scenery—barren, bare, and brown—was too hideous for contemplation. There was nothing for it but patiently to consume one's frugal meals of cold beef and hard-boiled eggs, and whisky and soda-water, peruse one's books and newspapers, and stolidly endure.

One good point about the conditions of our mortal existence is that everything comes to an end. How often do we not have occasion to rejoice at that? Sung roused me at dawn one morning with the glad news that we were 'there.' A chaos of sampans, a noise as of a multitude of maniacs, a crowd of crazy junks, like the vessel of the Ancient Mariner, through which it was no easy matter to force a passage. The bridge of boats, thank Heaven! across which a marriage procession was slowly winding; the bride's palanquin of red and gold swinging clumsily along under an embroidered

baldachino on four poles. Hard by the ever-attentive Mafoo and the horses. The Tartar grinned a welcome from ear to ear, but his glad face clouded as he hearkened to the elaborate and minute instructions which I was inflicting upon Sung. Lean not on broken reeds, he seemed to say. Will you never learn wisdom? Is the Tung-Chow episode already forgotten? There was no help for it. Sung had to be trusted. I was bound to visit my friend. Luggage and various cases of curios had to be bestowed upon the steamer. Could he be relied upon to see to this business and take the tickets? A guileless smile as of a newborn babe flitted across his face. Of course he could. He had made a slight mistake because not sufficiently instructed. Now he knew his duty. Put boxes on ship; take tickets; pay boat. The cost of the latter, by the way, including double fare and *cumsha*, amounted only to about forty shillings for the journey of a hundred and fifty miles. Take tickets; put boxes on ship.

The *Eldorado*, bound for Shanghai. I might go off on my expedition with a mind at ease, for the faithful Sung — this time comprehending—would carry out his instructions to the letter.

At my friend's house there was a party of shipowners and captains, whose conversation was amusing and instructive. As the result of an experience of many years, they all agreed in hatred of the Chinese, whom they declare to be trustworthy in business, but otherwise insolent, treacherous and false, incorrigible liars. Gratitude for kindness enters not into their composition. The missionaries, they said, are able to do little good, for to accept Christianity, save as a means to an end, is voluntarily to become a pariah; and the ruling principle of the Celestials is devotion to home ties. Many become converts for a time in order to learn English, and, this advantage being gained, they return to their ancient faith. A certain Captain Petersen was present, master of the ship *Mejoo*, who ten

days before had passed through a dramatic experience. His ship had been ordered up the Yangtze to transport to Hankow a number of soldiers who had been engaged in the Tonquin War. There was a general on board, and in his keeping was a treasure-chest, whose contents were to be delivered at Hankow to be used for military purposes. In course of transit he became aware that some of his own men were missing—the passengers had been drafted from various regiments. There must be 'enemies' on board—pirates or thieves disguised. One morning he came upon some fingers and toes, and other débris of a victim. Which were the real soldiers, and which not? Those who could be counted on to defend the treasure-chest were being picked off one by one. With characteristic Chinese cruelty, the general determined that for the common good the soldiers who were not personally known to his subordinates must be sacrificed. He gave secret orders accordingly, that on a given day all known soldiers were to dress their pigtails

with a 'peculiar thread.' Then all were mustered on deck for parade. The first man who appeared without the distinguishing mark had his head promptly cut off at the top of the companion. Thus fell more than a dozen heads, and the deck ran with blood. After a while the general shouted down between decks to the effect that he was weary of head-chopping, and that the rest of the ruffians might make a bolt for it and leap overboard. Some obeyed and swam ashore. Those who could not swim were drowned, for no Chinaman would put out a finger to save a drowning man. The theory is that there are always a multitude of souls waiting, as it were, in the lobby for their turn to enter the world. By preventing the departure of one who has been ordered to go, you deprive a new-comer of his chance. By this energetic action were saved the majority of the honest men. That some should have to suffer was a misfortune.

On my way north I was myself witness of a

characteristic act of 'Chinese justice.' A native passenger, who had robbed another, was caught red-handed. The compradore and his mates (Chinese officials in charge of the cargo) seized him, tied him by the pigtail to a ringbolt, bound his feet together, and proceeded to beat him with bamboos. For *three hours* the discipline was continued, and when the man was loosed he was more than half dead. Later I inquired after him, and was quietly informed that he had tumbled overboard. He was only a coolie with no belongings. The European captain dared not interfere, for the vessel was a native one, belonging to the Company of China Merchants.

Brigandage and piracy belong to the 'good old institutions' which are so firmly rooted in this country that the strongest measures fail entirely to suppress them. The first time that I steamed over to Macao I was considerably surprised by the aspect of the vessel. Now, Macao, Portuguese settlement, once the centre of the slave trade, is the Brighton and Monte

Carlo of Hong Kong. But a few hours distant, it is the chief 'Saturday to Monday' resort of the opulent English and Chinese. The former stroll about the shore, or loll under the veranda of the hotel, while the latter indulge in 'fantan,' a mild kind of gambling dear to the soul of the Celestial. The steamers that ply between Hong Kong and Macao are small, but cosy, provided with a saloon and upper deck, like the boats on the American rivers. They are officered by Englishmen or Americans, and I was no little taken aback, being new to China then, to notice when on board the *Kiu-Kiang* that sentries marched up and down, each armed with a drawn sword and a revolver. The first-class saloon presented the aspect of an armoury: cutlasses and loaded revolvers ornamented the panels, loaded rifles stood ready in racks; but, in spite of this threatening display, ladies sat working quietly in groups, or playing chess or backgammon—for use is second nature, and they were familiar with the possibility of attack.

'Surely,' I inquired, 'there can be no pirates on so well-worn a route?'

'You've not heard of the *Greyhound*, I reckon, or the *Stork?*' drawled the Yankee skipper as he played the piano. 'It was only a few weeks ago that a band of pirates went on board disguised as second-class passengers, and, out at sea, rushed on the upper deck, murdered the captain and two officers, and possessed themselves of the valuables. They won't do that here, I think.'

With a chuckle he led me to the companion and pointed downwards. The second-class passengers were relegated to the lower deck, and across the doorway, which was the sole means of communication from below, was drawn and securely padlocked a heavy iron grating like the front of a tiger's cage. To the fresh mind of a new-comer, it was like sitting on a volcano that might erupt at any moment. Money travels in boxes on board these boats, for use on the fantan gaming-tables. The pirates' plot was beautiful in its

simplicity. Clad in the artless blue cotton of common coolies, there was nothing easier than to embark in sufficient numbers to surprise the crew and take possession of the vessel. The Macao boats have been attacked on various occasions. Hence the tiger-grating, the cut lasses, and firearms ready loaded.

CHAPTER XI.

AN ADVENTURE.

WHILE gossiping with pleasant companions under a hospitable roof, time speeds more quickly than one is aware of. It behoved me to be off and make for the good ship *Eldorado*. A ride of a couple of miles, and behold! The busy Bund, with its low line of warehouses, its green trees, and floating over the consulate the ever-welcome Union Jack. But where was the *Eldorado?* There was no passenger steamer at the quay. Perchance it had stuck in the mud below, as we had done when coming up the river. Information on this point could be gained at the hotel. Horror! The *Eldorado* had left Tientsin four hours ago, taking with it Sung and the luggage! He

had carried out his instructions to the letter. I had never contemplated being left behind. This was truly vexatious. Was it possible to remain for a week or more at this horrible place without a change of clothes? Certainly not. What was to be done? The northern coast is enveloped for weeks together in dense fogs. Should I ride across country to the Taku Forts, hoping that some mishap would delay the steamer in the Pei-ho? But what if I missed her in the fog, or were to behold her steaming away into the open? Would it be better to charter a boat and start in pursuit of the truant? But what of those weary windings? Whilst weighing this grave matter over some lunch at the hotel, the Mafoo arrived breathless with the intelligence that a 'small ship' was just starting for Cheefoo. Now, the *Eldorado* was bound to lie for a day at least at Cheefoo to unload and take in cargo. Twenty-four hours! Starting at once I should be sure to catch her. Here was a piece of good fortune. There was not a

moment to be lost. Before I had time to reflect we were off—I, as had frequently been the case of late, the only European passenger. On taking stock of my surroundings, the subject of recent conversation recurred to my mind, and I began to have visions of pirates. The vessel was small, and old, and crazy. The captain was a Dane, uncouth, and given to drink. Six of his crew were Europeans of various nationalities; the rest were Tartars, athletic and honest-looking fellows. But then the boat was crowded with native passengers—men, women, and children, who huddled in heaps on deck as well as below, a seething mass of foul humanity. Gazing down into semi-obscurity through a sickening haze of opium, one could see, glimmering, a host of little lamps like fireflies. Sure the tiny craft could not have carried one other human atom. As tight as sardines in a box lay all these creatures, gurgling, choking, smoking, sleeping heavily—stark naked many, by reason of the heat. Some were unconscious already. No

one was heeding them. It would need but a kick to overturn one of the opium-lamps and set us blazing. The cargo we carried was vermicelli and straw-plaiting. Please Heaven we might soon catch up the *Eldorado!* Well, what is done is done. There is nothing to be gained by looking on the ugly side of the inevitable. I would go to bed and sleep.

The night and the whole of the next day passed without incident, except a few groundings in the mud. I spoke to the captain about the lamps, and he laughed like a rusty door-hinge, and suggested that we should have a drink. We emerged from the weariful Pei-ho, passed the low white line of the Taku Forts, lay-to for a few hours for the tide, then steamed out into a dense white fog like a sheet of cotton-wool. How wise I had been not to ride! In this fog, though, we might pass the steamer unobserved. Ridiculous! She could travel twice as fast as we, and I should be lucky if I caught her at Cheefoo. If we ever reached Cheefoo! I began to have misgivings. Now,

in cold blood, this seemed the most idiotic expedition, and yet we were making way slowly to the music of the foghorn, with an occasional false alarm of running down a junk.

The end came sooner than expected, and in a most unpleasant form. I think it was towards the end of the second night (still in a fog) that I started up, awakened by a blow upon the door. Life on board ship is so monotonous that a change from the routine of sounds fills a passenger with tremors. Except my boots, I was fully dressed, having no night things. My watch, hanging on a nail, swung to and fro, and I saw that it was half-past three. *Saw*—for it was daylight, or lamp-light—what? Beyond the diminutive open scuttle was the sheet of wool, but yellow now, not white. I guessed what had happened before the second thud, which was followed by the warning voice of the gruff Dane, saying thickly, 'Ship afire! come!' He was not sober, yet had his wits about him. 'Take this,' he said, handing me a rusty cutlass.

'We have but two boats. We Europeans will take one—likely we'll have to fight for it—the natives may have the other.' At first, fortunately, there was but little panic. If there had been, what a hell upon the waters that overcrowded burning vessel! She was fairly alight, and flared like a box of matches, illuminating the oily sea for yards around. Through the opening in the deck came a smell of burning flesh, for many of the sleepers were so opiumized as to lie charred beyond awaking. The boats were safely lowered, and with little difficulty the knot of Europeans and Tartar sailors got into one and made off. Then there was a violent scuffle as the drowsy natives realized their situation. We saw them fighting in the smoke with teeth and nails for possession of the other boat—a walnut-shell among so many. It was an awful spectacle. The women and the men, with guttural cries and shrill screams, were swaying and writhing, black figures against the flame, for a moment to be lost in a smoke-swirl, then to reappear

and tussle. The boat was filled and got away, vanishing behind the fog-curtain. The ship burned quickly to the water's edge, a lurid spot against the white. The water was full of specks, that struggled for an instant and then sank. Warily we approached and picked up a few, as many as we dared without sacrificing the lives of all. Then we made off to the right—the coast side—and as we turned our stern, a hand rose up and clung to it. One of the crew unwound the small frail fingers and shook off the hand, and, leaning over, I could see a woman sink—a child in one arm tight clasped—in the clear water, her face turned upward as she went, with bubbles round her head, down, down, turning greener and greener, fainter and more faint, till she melted out of sight.

Off into the fog, how far from land no one seemed to know, in a cockleshell overloaded. How lucky the sea was calm! Yet was it lucky? The waves were preferable to the pirates, for the fishers of this coast enjoy the worst of reputations. At daylight a fishing-

junk would swoop on us; or if not, and we reached land, what then? Ill-treatment, torture, a lingering death in a cage. Sir Harry Parkes and Mr. Loch underwent their torments in this very region. How much better the sea than such a martyrdom! I began to think of the evil visages of the men whom I had seen executed at Canton six months ago. We rowed in batches, taking turns of an hour or so about—rowing for the sake of doing something, the future as grim as possible. We could not have proceeded more than three or four hours when we sighted something through the mist, and, for one, my heart seemed to get into my throat. Here was our fate, bearing down on us, quite close at hand—the expected fishing-junk, or what? Perchance its owner might prove an honest man. Strange! It was something larger and taller than a junk that was looming through the vapour, and white, whereas the latter are gaily coloured. As the phantom approached, the captain, who had

been glum and silent, gave a shriek of joy. A *gun-boat!* Yes. It was one of the new gun-boats on the European model, of which Li-Hung-Chang is so pardonably proud, proceeding to its station at Cheefoo. The Imperial dragon on a yellow ground floated aft. We were taken on board and treated with the utmost kindness. In due course the spreading sands and nestling temples and missionary palaces of Cheefoo appeared in sight, and there—lying tranquilly at anchor, surrounded by barges piled high with merchandise—was MY steamer! I was sent on board in the admiral's pinnace, and was met at my cabin-door by the calm Sung, who, strong in a consciousness of duty punctually performed, wore an expression of seraphic peace.

All's well that ends well. I never forgot, and never shall, and see again in dreams sometimes, the imploring face of that pallid, mute, drowning Chinese woman, pitifully staring upward, surrounded by its aureole of bubbles, as it slowly sank down into the green.

JAPAN

CHAPTER XII.

THE INLAND SEA.

At five o'clock one summer morning the passengers on board the good ship *Hiroshima Maru* were awakened by the stopping of the engines. Was there an accident? No! Such a cheerful chattering and laughing, quite different from the boorish noisiness of the Chinese—a shrill twittering like that of gladsome birds. All rushed on deck, clad some in pyjamas, some in such draperies as in the hurry came to hand, to gaze for the first time upon Japan.

Around the placid land-locked bay, where we had anchored, was a broken circle of low hills—so strangely green after the arid banks of the Pei-ho—with houses like Swiss châlets,

nestling on the water's edge in clumps of darkling pines, and a narrow channel seaward—the toy bay of Nagasaki. Myriad boats buzzed like flies about us, manned by toy men and women, all in the wildest spirits. Miniature thick-set men, with shock heads of hair like black mops, and good-humoured brown faces and glistening white teeth. Whereas the yellow Chinese coolies are usually stripped to the waist, and wear nothing but blue baggy trousers and shoes with thick white soles, the Japanese peasant affects a jacket of indigo cotton, bedizened with some strange heraldic device in white and red, a straw hat, with sometimes a tiger painted on it, and straw sandals. At work—and the brisk little fellow does not save his muscles—he wears nothing except a loin-cloth and mushroom hat. If a carpenter comes into your room to put up a shelf, he leaves his clothes at the door out of respect, and no one is astonished or shocked. Indeed, many are so elaborately tattooed all over their bodies that the design serves in lieu of gar-

ments. Everything came fresh upon the eye as a pleasant change; from the small neat figures, in close-belted jackets and tight dark cotton gaiters to the knee and otherwise bare limbs, to the semi-Alpine scenery and plain unpainted houses. On land, as with field-glasses we curiously took in the scene, all was activity; not the rude plodding, pushing activity of the Middle Kingdom, but a light, swift tripping, with an accompaniment of wooden clogs; nods and smiles for everyone, and eccentric salutations to acquaintances, consisting of a slap on either thigh, and a bend of the body as though it were hinged at the loins. The women strike one as very pretty—willowy and graceful—no unbecoming loose trousers, or rouge or barbaric ornaments, or garish colours. Theirs is the ruddy skin and elastic gait of mountaineers. Their trim little pink toes are unmaimed, their hair is usually dressed loose, unmarred by the hideous pomatum of China.

On landing, the first impression of the town is one of disappointment and regret. The streets

are wide, and scrupulously clean; the houses consist sometimes of two low stories; the walls are of wood; the roofs, held in their places by big stones, are thickly thatched with many flat layers of bark—like the cedar spills we use for lighting—all of the same dull brown. One misses (thankfully) the greasy offal, the infinitely varied dirt and shocking smells of the last few months; but one also misses the quaintly different gilt and painted signs that hang in such numbers, or stand erect on pedestals in a Chinese street, the curled-up eaves and brilliant tracery of tiles. A Japanese street is dull and dismal always, monotonously brown and dark, the only ornamentation a blue or chocolate awning, bearing the cognizance of the local magnate. At Nagasaki, the goods displayed in the open shops are deplorable, betraying at the first casual glance the evil artistic influence of recently irrupted Europe. Such common and obtrusively meretricious vulgar porcelain. Ah, me! What would the sturdy old potters of Hirado and of Satsuma

have said, could they have beheld the careless productions of their degenerate posterity that everywhere courted purchase? They laboured at their art for love of it, with a tender, admiring worship. These work for dollars, to be earned with the least possible trouble. Modern Imari dishes, as feeble in design as poor in hue; contemptible jars, daubed green and yellow, impertinently labelled Kaga-ware. Bands of embroiderers were insolently working —unabashed in open day—at dreadful American eagles and fearsome union jacks in aniline colours, and when, horror-stricken, one stopped to gaze, they banged their foreheads on the mat and looked up smiling, without the vestige of a blush. The goods were coarse and ugly, doubtless, but would 'go off,' for were they not well adapted to the peculiar taste of foreigners—lowered to their abject level?

It was more pleasant to enter a temple and refresh the eye with a twilit glimpse of the ancient treasures stored there. Under a grove of sad-toned trees, up a long steep flight of

steps, whereon, as on a ladder of a Far-East Jacob, angels (with wooden clogs and turned-in toes) were constantly ascending and descending. At intervals, light wooden arches, bedecked with festoons of barley and bunches of flowers, and fluttering strips of paper. At the top a small paved square, and, beyond, the entrance to the temple. A temple of the Shinto religion, in progress a religious ceremony. But little reverence was displayed by the congregation, or, rather, the audience. On holy ground geta or clogs had been doffed, hands had been piously rinsed in water drawn from a bronze lotos-leaf, encircled by a dragon; and, ritual thus satisfied, worshippers sat in groups—women and children chiefly—loudly laughing, and sipping cups of tea, while the priests went through their performance. Although the 'No' dances—a species of ecclesiastical ballet—have gone out of fashion, there is still much posturing of a slow and graceful kind connected with religious ceremonial in Japan. In the present instance, two rows of

solemn old gentlemen squatted on a matted floor—an avenue of blue silk robes and high gauze hats with wings, melting into darkness in vanishing perspective. Unlike the Buddhist priests and priestesses, whose skulls are as bare and shiny as billiard balls, these had the hair shaven only from the brow, the rest being swept from the face behind the ears and tied in a knot, with a small queue pointing upwards and forwards, like a scorpion's tail. Theirs were the combined functions of orchestra and chorus, while a small boy in the middle did *prima ballerina*, some banging drums and tomtoms, wildly clashing cymbals, exhorting to unflagging zeal; while others, more peacefully disposed, tootled on flutes, swayed to and fro, or measured the time by hand-clapping. Sometimes, when proceedings were becoming perfunctory, one of the drowsy number would wake up, and, with a frown of reproach, summon the brethren to renewed energy by violent clatter; and then the *premier danseur*, who had been gyrating in circles round a caldron full of boiling

water, would wake up too, and wave his arms and quicken his pace, shaking above his head a bunch of bells, and stirring the water with a wand. The small neophyte seemed mightily pleased with himself—his sense of self-importance completely gratified—as, after a particularly neat twirl, he would turn with a self-conscious smile, and a sly twinkle of the eye, to court the approval of the audience. Nor was his task a light one. The figures of his dance were as intricate as those of the Pavanne. He gyrated in and out of a circle marked by bamboos adorned with paper strips upright in sockets, bobbing under arches decked with flowers and rice-stems, now and again changing the wand for a brush of green bamboo-shoots, with which he sprinkled water from the pot over those within reach. A very pretty tableau, this, as an introduction to a panorama, novel and picturesque. The floating child, in a long robe of white, vivid in the sun against a background of antique camphor-trees and towering black cryptomeria ; on one side,

the darkling mass of blue priests, backed by gilded screens, shadowed by the temple eaves; on the other, through the luxuriant greenery, a vista of tea-gardens in chequered shade, and tripping maidens assiduously serving guests; beyond, flecked by a multitude of white boats, the blue waters of the bay, encircled by a low line of verdant hills; in front, a merry gathering of young ladies and children, all clad in tender tones of steel-gray, and pale browns, and russets, selected with unerring instinct.

Quite a pocket country this, compact and complete in its neat smallness. Nothing can be more trim and dapper than the miniature sailors in their white dress *à l'Anglaise*. About both men and women there is a peculiar and subtle grace, which renders even the female shuffle and bent back and turned-in toes by no means unbecoming.

Away from Nagasaki, through a narrow passage which opens out somewhat as you proceed, threading among islets which you could

cross at a stride, lovelily wooded to the water's edge, with toy villages nestling along the shores. Much traffic in boats, shooting hither and thither like white birds, built all of them of light wood unpainted; canvas sails in festoons, glitteringly white and spotless, unlike those of China, which, made of unravelling matting, usually flutter in rags like dusky shirts in holes. Tiny craft, and tiny rowers, and tiny mountains—the kingdom of Lilliput, as clean as a new pin. Presently you round a corner and are in a little bay with a narrow opening in front, and a town at the opening, dark and heavy roofed, half buried in pine-trees, reflected brokenly in rapid water running at seven knots. The town of Shimonesaki this, which would fit into your portmanteau easily—the key of the Inland Sea.

With a grand uproar, mock exclamations of fear and peals of laughter, a bare-legged native contingent arrives in cockleshells with bows and smiles for all, dressed (both sexes) in cotton dressing-gowns, or *kimonos*, and straw

shoes—wooden clogs are tabooed on shipboard. It is odd that one never can tell the age of a Japanese who has seen sixteen summers, until he is about sixty, and the strangest mistakes arise. Old and young are much alike. I conversed with a middle-aged gentleman of staid appearance who spoke English fluently, and set him down at about fifty. It transpired that he was an ensign in a cavalry regiment proceeding to Tokio on leave, and that his age was twenty-two. Another who might have been a hundred was only thirty years old.

Through the rocky passage into a glassy lake—a calm and joyous scene of tranquil prosperity—a corner of Arcadia, devoted to jolly fisherfolk, bathed in golden sunset. A shimmering sea of gold and crimson merging into amethyst and aquamarine, a sky of purple and violet and red melting above into deep blue, a trail of heavy funnel-smoke in a black smear across it, a finger-mark of human toil on fairyland.

I wonder what it is that makes the Inland Sea so beautiful. Is it the intense calm, the glamour of complete content? Yellow cliffs or bluffs fall sheer into pellucid water, sometimes rugged, half veiled with sober fir or bright bamboo, sometimes quite covered, feathering to the edge, to be there darkly shadowed. On the tops single umbrella-pines are cut in weird silhouette instead of mingling in groups, villages are mirrored in long lengths. The bluffs alternate with wee creeks, where, on stretches of golden sand, are boats drawn up in rows. Every object is clearly doubled with an indescribable effect of peace. No typhoons or hurricanes vex these enchanted waters. The ruddy athletic fisher-folk turn as they loll upon the sand to grin with glancing teeth, and wave a cheerful welcome as we go by. What a region for a tortured soul to fly to, and regain its toppling equilibrium!—for a world-worn spirit, safe from politics, and letters, and worries, and disappointments, to escape into, from the mundane round of dis-

illusions — tumbled castles in the air — and dream — the world forgetting, by the world forgot — secure from the storms of life! Until this waterway was opened to foreigners a few years ago, what a haven of repose! A haven still, for even now foreign steamers are not allowed to touch, except at places prearranged—to wit, Shimonesaki and Kobé. If in dead of night one were to drop into a shallop and stealthily steal ashore, and seek ere day one of yonder deserted peaks, and there take refuge in a cave, how pleasing it would be to gaze down from the eyry at the melting funnel-smoke, just out of touch with the world, unruffled by its roughness. But then I dare say one would speedily—since man is doomed never to be satisfied—grow tired of one's hermitage. Once, some years ago, I was the happy temporary possessor of a charming bungalow at Mandeville, far up in the Blue Mountains of Jamaica. An old friend and I so panted for peace that we could not even bear each other. I dwelt

in one hut, he in another, with no society but tree frogs, a serpent or two, a choice selection of scorpions and centipedes and 'jiggers.' We lived on potted meats and biscuits and fair water—a store of provisions we had brought with us. For days we never looked on human visage, content to dream and gaze on the face of nature in one of her most amiable moods, to sit and look and look, drinking in the details of one of the fairest landscapes in all the beautiful world. One morning arrived from far-off Kingston a panting nigger-boy, with post for burthen. Out on him! Away with letters, vile travel-stained newspapers! Well, since here they were, it might be as well to glance at them. It was the arrival of the Wicked Fairy laden with apples of Discord. A moment ago who so calm as I? A whiff of smoky London and its turmoil! A chronicle of the labours, and successes, and failures of much-esteemed friends at home! Peace had taken wing. I dashed down the papers and made for the other hermitage. My friend was

sprawling in the veranda, immersed in a *Glasgow Herald* three months old.

'I must be off!' I cried. 'Can't stand this dulness any more.' Reflectively he raised his head.

'Very odd! I'm like that too. Yesterday it wasn't dull. Let us be off.' And off we were that very afternoon, and homeward-bound by the next steamer.

But here, in the Inland Sea, where there are no centipedes and no specially aggravating serpents to make one misanthropical, the mind would not lose its healthy tone. A man who had been grossly wronged would find surcease here from suffering, soothed by surroundings which are placidly sweet and quietly comfortable and untroubled. And yet, who knows? The human animal has a marvellous capacity for being bored. Perhaps the rough-and-tumble hurly-burly of the seething world and enforced work—a species of moral cautery—is the better panacea for bruises.

Now, as the vessel plods and puffs along the

narrow waterway which seems to be a lake, one is reminded of Killarney. There is the same smallness of scale, which is a trifle disappointing, the same exceeding greenness; but then here there is constant variety and change. The people and the boats and the dwellings are equally new and picturesque. As the hours drone by and the panorama slowly passes, it is not possible to avoid a tinge of romance more suitable to inexperienced youth than to our gray hairs. One finds one's self remembering snatches of Byron and Shelley, reflecting on the frenzied doings of the Corsair and the Giaour as the acts of not wholly impossible persons. At dinner-time romance is somewhat blunted (along with the appetite) by the badness of the food, and the abnormal capacity for devouring tough beef evinced by certain European ladies; but it is not until, debouching from the Inland Sea, one reaches Kobé, that one comes thumping down again to the prosaic earth. Kobé is a treaty port, with a Bund, or quay; an hotel,

with billiard-tables and Bourbon whisky and cocktails, and a pervading smell in the streets of sour tea from the many establishments employed in firing the dried leaves. The grip of Europe is on Kobé. The things in the shops are horribly ugly. The ricksha-men gabble broken English, and try to cheat you, since you are not yet accustomed to the coinage. Selfishness gushes over the soul. Oh that, when Japan was opened, it had been to one alone—one's self the privileged foreigner!

END OF VOL. I.

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